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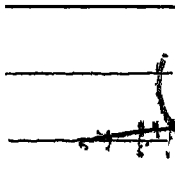
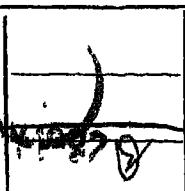
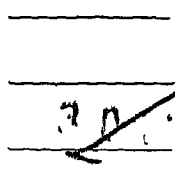
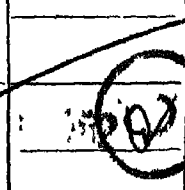

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ORTEGA Y GASSET, EXISTENTIALIST

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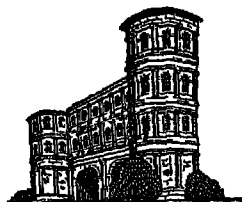
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THE HUMANIST LIBRARY
ORTEGA Y GASSET
EXISTENTIALIST

A Critical Study of His Thought
and Its Sources

by
José Sánchez Villascñor, S.J.

Translated from the Spanish
by
Joseph Small, S.J.



HENRY REGNERY COMPANY
Chicago, Illinois

1949

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Archbishop of Chicago

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Translator's Preface

IN 1943 FATHER JOSÉ SÁNCHEZ VILLASEÑOR, S. J., a young Mexican Jesuit, won the Justo Sierra Award of the University of Mexico when this book was judged the best doctoral study submitted to any department of that university over a period of several years. Since that date the book has stimulated much interest and criticism throughout the Spanish-speaking world. A second edition was printed recently in Spain.

Here in the United States both José Ortega y Gasset, Spain's leading exponent of the philosophy of existentialism, and Jean Paul Sartre of the French school are gathering a growing band of followers through translations of their books. A thorough evaluation of existentialism in English is therefore in order. Father Sánchez' exposition, analysis, and evaluation are penetrating and persuasive. He shows not only a thorough acquaintance with the thought of individual modern philosophers, but also a clear perspective of their respective positions in the wider philosophical currents.

When José Sánchez Villaseñor finished high school in 1927, he wished to become a Jesuit. Since President

Calles was at that time persecuting the Church in Mexico, José was forced to travel to a small college at Ysleta, Texas, where the exiled Mexican Jesuits were pursuing their studies. There on the edge of a desert fifteen miles east of El Paso he studied philosophy, science, and the humanities for nine years before returning to Mexico for three years of lecturing in philosophy at Guadalajara.

His superiors sent him to Rome in 1939 to study theology and to become better acquainted with the works of the German philosophers. But living conditions in wartime Rome undermined his health, forcing him to return to Mexico in the autumn of 1941 and to follow a restricted diet. While convalescing in Mexico City he enrolled as a special student at the University of Mexico and later fulfilled the requirements for a doctorate in philosophy. His analysis of Ortega's philosophy was accepted as his dissertation and awarded the Justo Sierra prize.

In 1946 he was ordained to the priesthood at the Jesuit house of studies in West Baden Springs, Indiana. After a short stay in Mexico he was sent to Argentina for further study.

I am deeply grateful to the author for reading and approving the English version of his book. It was the suggestion of Father Raymond V. Schoder, S. J., that prompted the translation, and his patient reading and correction of the manuscript proved an invaluable aid in completing the work.

J. S.

WEST BADEN COLLEGE

August 30, 1947

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Introduction

The Man

AMONG THOSE PHILOSOPHERS INFLUENCING MODERN CULTURE none has been so widely acclaimed by Spanish-speaking peoples as José Ortega y Gasset. Born at Madrid in 1883, he received his bachelor's degree from the Jesuits at Miraflores del Palo near Málaga. His university studies were taken at the Central University in Madrid where he was awarded his doctorate in philosophy and letters in 1904. He then left Madrid, escaping, as he himself says, from the intellectual depression of his native land, and set out for Leipzig, famous for its libraries and its university. Perhaps he was attracted, as he says, by the secret voice of the "fair German, pensive and romantic, who subconsciously dwells in my soul."¹

In 1906 we find him at the University of Berlin. Later he attended the University of Marburg where, he tells us, "I passed the twilight of my youth; to it I owe at least half of my hopes and almost all my discipline."² There he became acquainted with the great Neo-Kantian, Hermann

Cohen. Not without a touch of emotion does he recall those unforgettable nights when he visited the home of his teacher and discussed beauty and art while "the deep black sky filled itself with yellow, restless stars quivering like the heartbeats of an infant."³

Since his promotion in 1910 to the chair of metaphysics at the Central University of Madrid his production has been enormous. In 1922 he founded the *Revista de occidente* intended to diffuse throughout the Spanish-speaking world the new philosophical and scientific trends, while emphasizing the supremacy of German culture.

Ortega envisions the Germanic culture as opposed to the Latin, which he contemptuously labels "Mediterranean." Nor could it be otherwise for one who by his own admission carries within himself a fair German whose spirit listens to the "sonorous reminiscences, where . . . those familiar voices endure that give breath to the bosom of the Germanic forests."⁴

The new ideas, eagerly imbibed at the German universities, express his convictions. "The German soul," he wrote at this time, "contains in itself today the highest appreciation of the human being, that is, of the European culture."⁵

The Latin clarity praised by Menéndez y Pelayo is a myth according to Ortega. Latin culture is a gilded illusion with which we wish to console ourselves. It does not exist. There is merely a "Mediterranean" culture. And this "cannot compare its own achievements with those of German science."⁶

German culture is immortal Greece's legitimate heir. Really, "Greek thought reappears in Germany. After a

long sleep the Platonic ideas reawaken in the minds of Galileo, Descartes, Leibnitz and Kant. The god of Aeschylus, more ethical than metaphysical, re-echoes coarsely, powerfully in Luther; the pure Attic democracy in Rousseau, and the muses of the Parthenon, untouched for centuries, surrender one fine day to Donatello and Michelangelo, Florentine youths of German ancestry."⁷ Furthermore, Europe owes its existence to the Germanic principle of personal will and to the claim of independence dominated by neither state nor universe. In things cultural the Latin lacks clarity, precision, but in the German there is no obscurity. The Germanic versus the Latin "is the culture of profound reality" against "the culture of superficiality."⁸

We find this same firm conviction even years later in his writings, and surely in dramatic form. "I too sinned one time," he confesses, "and I pitted the German metaphysical mind against the southern way of life close to my heart, which is, I would say, a pebble of the Mediterranean polished for centuries by the laughing sea and which one time was scraped by the keel of Ulysses' grape-laden bark."⁹

Famous as a lecturer, Ortega did not confine himself to his university chair. Sensitive to current affairs and finding books ineffective for bringing new ideas to the masses, he did not disdain to descend to periodicals, "the intellectual marketplace." Nothing seemed difficult to his ambition of stimulating Spain to live up to the spirit of the times. He passionately devoted himself even to politics, so little favorable and so repugnant to the reflective spirit. After the fall of the monarchy in Spain, he served in positions of highest responsibility. Although he be-

stowed on sports a high philosophical respectability, he never indulged in them himself, scrupulously attentive to what he calls his destiny of writing and conversation. The whim and caprice of the artistic world has forced him to deprive himself of all art, even literary. At least that is what he thinks.

His Thought

"My vocation," he asserts, "is reasoning, solicitude for a clear insight into things." But the reasoning was conceived as a search for integral truth. The sciences, notwithstanding their clarity and precision, restrict themselves to secondary problems. The ultimate and decisive questions they leave untouched. "How can one live unmindful of the ultimate, dramatic questions? Whence comes the world, and whither does it go? . . . What is the essential notion of life? . . . We need a well-rounded perspective with a full background, not a mutilated landscape, not an horizon from which the attractive throb of the farthest distances has been severed."¹⁰

An eagerness enslaved to truth dominates him. It is the voice of life itself, which presents problems like those presented to Oedipus by his tempting enigmas. For Ortega, the Sage of the Escorial, thinking is not an abstract and easy task, nor a luxury of life attainable only by one who frees himself from the constraints of existence; rather, it is "the exasperating toil of a being that finds itself in a lost world and endeavors to orientate itself."¹¹ To think is to live, to seek a solution for the enigmas which are constantly fashioning a hostile environment.

It is natural that each of Ortega's writings should reflect his own existence at the moment in which they were drawn up.

He insistently seeks to convince us of his irreproachable sincerity. "With the pleading entreaties of a lost mariner I have searched for men around me who were concerned with truth, pure truth, the objectivity of things in themselves. And I have scarcely found anyone."¹² Would such a one perhaps be himself?

Throughout Ortega's works the most frightening subjects of general metaphysics arise like threatening reefs. The enigma of the ego, dynamic and many-sided. The dramatic antithesis between truth, one and eternal, and life, ephemeral and fleeting, essentially historical. The origin and essence of morality. The nature of God. Psychic life in its mysterious triple manifestation of vitality, soul, and spirit. The nature of the enduring union between soul and body. Society and its meaning. History and its true significance. And interwoven with these and other eternal problems, what a wealth and variety of topics! A close collaborator of his could truthfully say, "Ortega has been the greatest originator of subjects": philosophical essays, art criticisms, travelogues, considerations regarding esthetics in a streetcar, and even a meditation on a picture frame. He writes of silence and of the Pampa in the same way that he writes of Proust, the Egyptians, or Fascism. With equal interest he discusses Kant, Atlantis, or Anne de Noailles.

Like a barometer of our culture, the works of this Spanish philosopher reflect with marvelous fidelity the spiritual profile of our time. Should anyone desire to know it, he need only gaze into the transparent crystal

of Ortega prose. Painting, music, history, literature, science, philosophy, the whole world of the spirit are rhythmically woven around the theme of life and become the grandest symphony of modern culture. Ortega is an indefatigable spectator whose view takes in world horizons, always hunting the exciting theme, the revealing data which aid in clarifying the meaning of the present moment, always seeking to unmask the enigmatic environment. And what originality in his approach to his subjects! What insight in his artful and unruffled exposition, what mastery in moving from one subject to another! It would be unjust not to recognize an eminent literary talent and an exquisite artistic sense.

One spring afternoon in the grove surrounding the Escorial, he began his *Meditaciones del Quijote* in which he attempts to penetrate to the genuine soul of Spain. His work, *The Modern Theme*, probably represents the best crystallization of the fleeting and dramatic Ortega thought. Rationalism, born one fine day in Socrates' brain along the Athenian walks, is a dim shadow of reality and the murderer of all real living. Relativism, while saving the phenomena and the individual fact, leads to skepticism, which transforms human life "into something absurd and illusory." If there was ever a mysterious and deplorable problem, this is it! Many of history's finest minds have foundered on it. Ortega boldly offers a revolutionary solution: "Pure reason must yield its supremacy to vital reason."¹⁸ Thought must be supplanted by existence.

His essay on Kant is a web of suggestions regarding this lofty subject. But among the books that so far have come from his pen none can compare with *Revolt of the*

Masses (*La Rebelión de las masas*) in its dramatic presentation, its expression of truth, its penetration and analysis. Faced with the unbridled rabble who reject all norms and encroach upon civilization like new barbarians, Ortega shudders in anticipation of catastrophe, the possible return to barbarism. He has discerned a serious cancer in the heart of European culture. "A glorious culture but without roots," in other words, immoralism. His diagnosis is pessimistic. It would be out of place here to attempt to follow his thought in its pleasant wanderings about this idea.

Faced with a line of thought so vital and challenging, the intellectual world could not remain indifferent. Years later he could assert that the sun never sets on the pages of the *Espectador*. Actually, his works have burst the bonds of his own language and have been scattered over the world in every civilized tongue. Nevertheless, around his name the most contrary opinions have fought a fierce battle. Thus Curtius asserts that Ortega is the only man in Europe able with equal interest and intensity to discuss Kant, Proust, Debussy, and Scheler. But this does not prevent an illustrious Spanish critic, in a series of most penetrating essays written against Ortega, from denying the latter's originality in philosophy and pre-eminence in metaphysics.¹⁴ On the other hand Julián Marías, a great admirer of Ortega, praises him highly in his history of philosophy. "Today," he says, "the Spain of Suarez again numbers a real metaphysician, original and thorough."¹⁵ In his opinion Ortega has clearly excelled the idealism of the past century. In him the reasoning of man from the Greeks to our own time receives full and significant expression. One Italian writer has called Ortega a

"minor Nietzsche."¹⁶ There is no need to multiply the references. Among the thundering chorus of his admirers one hears violent abuse, the harsh disparaging critic, the measured report which recognizes merit and scourges errors.

Wishing to shed a little light on a personality so widely discussed, we shall boldly undertake this study with no other guide than the desire for truth. Our mind is open to embrace all that is valuable. And although Ortega himself has stated that there is no great probability that a work like his own "will find a generous mind that will truly exert itself to understand his work,"¹⁷ we intend by our efforts to prove the contrary.

To clarify the abstruse thought of the great cultural philosopher, to reduce the legend woven around his name to its true proportions, devoid of all prejudice and free from all partiality, such is the purpose set for this modest effort. Of his encyclopedic works we shall consider only the philosophical side, leaving to future explorers the untouched veins rich in promise. In order not to distort the original development of Ortega's dynamic thought, we shall follow the historical method of exposition.

Part One: Exposition

SECTION ONE

THE EGO AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

I

Historical Perspective

Kantianism

ORTEGA'S IS A DYNAMIC AND FLUCTUATING MENTALITY. The evolutionary phases of his development faithfully reflect the vacillating historical panorama. To grasp the finest shadings of this development we must place it in its historical setting, fit his growth, even though sketchily, into the vast current of contemporary thought. Ortega's ideological message, under the light of a rigorous historical analysis, reveals itself as the ultimate phase of disintegrating Kantianism. The Sage of the Escorial has abundantly reaped the fruits of Kant's error sowed in his controversial work. While the *Critique of Pure Reason* contains the germ of today's skeptical relativism, the postulates of the *Critique of Practical Reason* have inevitably led to the moral irrationalism of our time. But let us look at history.

Kant climaxed his remarkable intellectual inquiries by confining metaphysics to the world of illusion and dreams. An unbridgeable abyss divides speculative reason from the

moral order. The *Critique of Practical Reason* vainly tries to dissolve the breach. Metaphysical realities (God's existence, free will, immortality of the soul), keystones in the ethical and social order, but without foundation in speculative reason, are a priori postulates due to the blind categorical imperative. The required equilibrium for man's rational nature has been shattered. The moral law, stripped of its metaphysical basis, becomes a thing of sentiment. Phenomena and appearances replace being. Chained in the murky cave of sense perception, the intellect can see only the fleeting shadows of things. All truth is mere appearance, relative; truth springs from the subjectivity of the human conscience. The *Critique of Pure Reason* contains the germ of skeptical relativism.

Nevertheless, one fact was driven home to Kant with irrefutable clarity: the historical reality of man's moral conscience. Yet that moral conscience is impossible without the existence of those metaphysical realities already condemned by pure reason to perpetual ostracism and stigmatized as transcendental illusions. In Kant's mind pure and practical reason, the intellect and the will, are engaged in a relentless warfare.

Here is a formidable and thorny dilemma. Either the agnostic principles of pure reason are retracted, or the moral world is withdrawn from the rule of speculative reason. Over such a terrifying problem Kant spread a merciful veil, his famous theory of synthetic a priori ethical judgments. Actually he based morality on an alogical and irrational foundation. God's existence, free will, and the immortality of the soul are for him not objective facts which the intellect proves and recognizes. They are blind postulates demanded by the will and feeling in the name of an immanent and subjective necessity. The *Critique of*

Practical Reason inevitably leads to ethical irrationalism.

Without abandoning Kant's transcendental method Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel endeavored to correct Kantianism's grave errors and inconsistencies. They fashioned the gigantic, disproportionate structures of absolute idealism, a romantic and exalted formalism which fell victim to specious objections. The transcendental method had been carried to the extreme. Having lost sight of reality, the individual extracts the universe from within himself.

Positivism

Meanwhile, about 1850, the symptoms of a new era appeared over the European horizon. Absolute idealism, which for several decades had ruled like a tyrant over the centers of culture, was losing prestige. Serious politico-social disturbances turned men's minds from the theoretical and posed white-hot problems of a positive and practical nature. Repercussions from the English industrial revolution and still more from the great French revolution were felt in all their intensity. Marx raised his inflammatory war cry: "Workers of the world, unite!" Socialism appeared on the scene. The irresistible progress of the natural sciences, thanks to the patient investigation and notable discoveries of a phalanx of chemists and physicists, with each advance more and more turned men's minds away from abstract speculation and aprioristic formalism. The new trend, the ultimate purpose of science, was to study facts minutely in their own immediate environment, to subject everything to the touchstone of experience.

Feuerbach, Haeckel, Moleschott, and Büchner unfurled

the banner of rebellion over the ruins of absolute idealism. The materialistic system, antithesis of idealism, proclaimed matter to be the essence of reality. It denied the spiritual or considered it a mere epiphenomenon of matter. Natural phenomena were explained by mechanical motion. Materialism possessed its own metaphysics.

But a new champion leaped into the arena. An enemy of all metaphysics, he battled both triumphant materialism and bankrupt idealism. The new movement, founded in France by Auguste Comte, proposed experimental facts and positive data as the object of scientific knowledge. Thus it assumed the name of Positivism. The intellect, shackled to experience, is unable to advance beyond the threshold of suprasensible experience, the domain of ultimate causes. Metaphysical concepts, a priori forms, Kantian categories were all rejected as unscientific.

Despite its opposition to idealism, positivism bears the indelible stamp of Kantian thought not only in establishing experience as the sole object of scientific knowledge, but also in affirming that pure reason is blind to suprasensible reality. On the other hand, positivism in its dogmatic form closely approaches the materialistic viewpoint. Littré, Taine, and Renan spread the new ideas through lectures and books. The world of savants was steeped in positivism. Philosophy, dethroned from its high pedestal, was assigned the duty of unifying the laws and conclusions of individual sciences. Having abandoned the high peaks of metaphysical speculation, psychology rejected introspection. From physiology it received a wealth of positive facts. It adopted the psychophysical method and became experimental. Sociology, elevated by Comte to the highest scientific importance, investigated the laws

ruling human society and was enriched by contributions from biology and physics.

Positivism took on an important shade of thought in adopting the theories of Darwin and Spencer. Nevertheless, the idea of evolution is as ancient as Greek thought. Evolution, familiar to Heraclitus and Speusippus, the Stoics and Neoplatonists, took on a biological aspect in Democritus and Empedocles. It is found in Dionysius the Arcopagite, and it reappeared in the Middle Ages in the writings of Scotus Erigena, Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, Giordano Bruno, and Böhme. Kant and his followers defended evolution in the modern period.

It was Darwin's role, however, to establish biological evolution with positive facts and scientific techniques. After long travels devoted to observation and study, he presented his conclusion in his famous work, *The Origin of Species*. There he asserts that as man produces a great variety of species in animals and plants by means of artificial selection, nature through natural selection has produced all the specific varieties which we notice in living beings. Years later, Darwin applied these theories to man—without openly denying the spiritual principle. Huxley, Vogt, and Haeckel drove on to the ultimate consequences, materialism. Everything in the universe, from amoeba to man, proceeds by evolution. God is rejected. Spencer, in his turn, introduced evolution into the philosophical field. Evolutionary biological positivism was recognized as the most scientific interpretation of the universe.

The biologico-positivistic theory of knowledge is worth noting because of its influence on current thought. With the spiritual principle discarded, only a difference of degree remains between rational and sensible knowledge.

Cognition is a biological function primarily directed to the conservation of the individual and of the species. Cognition implies the living being's adaptation to the external conditions of its environment, its vital reaction in face of hostile surroundings. This is one particular case of life's battle. Knowledge, therefore, is not meant to equate the intellect with reality itself, nor to prove experimental truth, but only to achieve man's practical, vital utility. Such ideas were held by Mach, Avenarius, Vaihinger, and Nietzsche.

But it was the American, William James, who extended Comte's famous principles to their present form. The ultimate form of Anglo-American positivism, pragmatism, is more a method than a system. Wishing to do away with the eternal metaphysical disputes, James prescinded from the objective worth of truth and emphasized its usefulness. In his opinion no theory is absolutely true. A theory is an instrument of action intended to adapt the thought to the facts along with practical considerations. Every theory is an hypothesis. Consequently, truth should renounce its halo of immutability and become something dynamic and fluid, a flexible instrument destined to rule nature by forcing it to serve human needs. Hence, no truth exists independent of the intellect. The world itself is an amorphous mass which we mold according to our practical purposes. Bergson partially adopted these ideas in his theory of *homo faber*.

But the positivistic doctrine did not remain in the lofty realm of philosophizing. Its sweeping influence soon enslaved art, literature, and religion. The painting of energetic, daring Gustave Courbet broke the tradition of Ingres and Delacroix. Putting aside the mythological medi-

eval themes of historical painting and closely observing the characteristics of his age, he strove to stamp into his canvas an exact and minutely precise representation of its customs and ideas. It is a revealing fact that in the preface to the catalogue of his personal exhibition in 1855 he justifies his position by an allusion to Compté's well-known motto: *Savoir pour pouvoir*.

In poetry the sentimental egotism of Musset and Lamartine contrasts with the cold, granite, impersonal verse of Leconte de Lisle, founder of the Parnassian school. The young poets attracted by his fame condemned romanticism. Art should be as objective and impersonal as science. Flaubert, the Goncourts, Zola, and Guy de Maupassant triumphed in their naturalistic novels written with a scientific tone. They stressed an exact replica of the concrete, abundant documentation, inexorable analysis, and all in the service of a materialistic concept of life.

Then there was the deterministic and experimental novel whose characters were explained as products of environment and heredity. The younger Dumas dramatized the new ideas. Not even the purely religious field was saved from the naturalistic hurricane. Compté's ludicrous plan to create a new religion of humanity is well known. It was a crude caricature of Christianity, destined to complete failure.

To the positivistic world, science came to be regarded as the magic word, the universal panacea, the new deity. Before this altar the past century fell on its knees just as the eighteenth century had prostrated itself before the goddess Reason. "Science alone," says Renan, one of positivism's high priests, "can solve the eternal problems the authoritative solutions of which man demands."¹

Neo-Kantianism

While positivistic ideas were holding sway in France, the crudest materialism dominated Germany. Against such an odious tyranny a group of scholars and philosophers took up arms. These included A. Lange, E. Zeller, Kuno Fischer, and O. Liebmann. Yet they were divided by contrary opinions and grouped themselves into several schools. Külpe, Liebmann, and Riehl favored a kind of metaphysical realism, while Hermann Cohen founded Marburg's school of logic, and Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert advocated the philosophy of value at Baden.

Cohen held a logical monism. Defending the transcendental method, he interpreted Kant in his own way. He did not deny the real world but insisted that only by the mind can the world be scientifically vindicated. Sensible objects are not objective, but presented to the mind as a problem. The mind, thanks to the categories, solves the problem. The mind develops the real order just as the will produces the ethical order, and the sense of beauty the esthetic world. Nothing prelogical or alogical was admitted. Nor did he distinguish between the natural and historical sciences. Ortega, it must be remembered, drank these ideas from the lips of Hermann Cohen himself.

Like Marburg, the Baden school also taught transcendental idealism in its theory of knowledge. All metaphysics was rejected, and no reality was admitted independent of that proposed by the mind. However, it did not confine itself, as did Marburg, to the theory of knowledge, but embraced the whole cultural life. Philosophy is defined as the critical science of values. Its object is any-

thing of value (truth, science, art, sanctity) presented in culture's historical evolution. To this extent history should be the foundation of philosophical study. Obviously, Neo-Kantian doctrine retains a notable coloring of positivism.

The Triumph of Life

The explosive state of affairs created by positivistic materialism and Neo-Kantian ideas could not be durable. At the end of the nineteenth century discredited rationalism dragged science down in its own fall. Bergson initiated the dazzling anti-intellectual offensive. European man with herculean effort broke his bonds and fled the positivistic dungeon. To the clear heavens he lifted eyes yearning for light. Eager to comprehend the ultimate truths, he disowned reason because it seemed identified with rationalistic systems. He tried new routes. Man, metaphysical by nature, was unable to satisfy himself with phenomena and contingent things. He longed to capture the essence, the substance of reality, and to achieve an integral view of ultimate causes. Science is a mute sphinx before the final and most fundamental questions: Whence comes man? Whither is he going? What is the meaning of life?

Distrustful of human intelligence he embraced intuition, instinct, life. He endeavored to create a system of metaphysics invulnerable to the critic's chisel. He swerved back to positivistic subjectivism. Glacial rationalism reducing all to dust with its inexorable analysis is sterile and leads to skepticism. The intellect's absolute reign inclines toward the materialization of life. Science, aided by rea-

son, endeavored to conquer the mysteries of the universe and by pouring reality into dead formulas attempted to rebuild it according to mechanical principles. However, life, that something beyond the scope of experience which has constantly mocked and challenged the scalpel and the microscope, manifests itself according to these thinkers, only in irrational intuition and in the mysterious world of emotion and instinct. Abstract reason cannot reach metaphysical realities. Its object is the inorganic solid. Thus reason triumphs in the geometric and the inert. But intelligence is unable to pass judgment on true values for these are judged by the heart, the emotional intuition, the vital impetus transformed into consciousness.

Such was the confused spiritualistic atmosphere which hung over Europe at the close of the last century. Only fifty years later can we appreciate in its vast complexity the marvelous perspective which those ideas project over the panorama of our present culture. As the inheritance, then, of a few intellectuals confined to select circles, the new ideas abandoned the heights. The avalanche of vitalism with its triumphant pressure subdued all in its path. Art, literature, politics, religion, philosophy, the whole domain of the spirit rendered unconditional homage and fealty to its influence.

In painting, a cluster of schools sprang up in search of novel methods. Cubism and Surrealism formed the most radical advance guard. Instead of realistic paintings the new schools splashed over the canvas confused subjective visions welling forth from the subconscious. In music, Debussy hoisted the banner of change and revolt. Since that time, as Ortega points out, we have been able to hear music without rapture and without weeping. Even

today literature is a living crucible where the most diverse trends and the most contrary movements are boiling. The whole gamut has been traveled. Symbolism, Modernism, Dadaism mark the most lively aspects of the disturbing wave. Proust, pessimistic and gloomy, carried Bergson's theories into the novel. Pure emotion, that original intuition beyond the reach of words, was the goal sought by the fanatical cult of the metaphor. It is necessary to recognize with Ortega that a new esthetic sensibility existed in the world.

This grave crisis, however, did not confine itself to the realm of beauty. Distrusting reason, people sought their salvation in instinct. In politics great myths arose. Altars were erected to national blood, to the race, to collectivity, and to the state. Nietzsche, that mad visionary, proudly studied his oracular table of values: the will to power, the cult of force. In flames Europe began the era of the superman. In the religious field, spiritism and innumerable pseudomystic trends: theosophy, impersonal life, and Christian Science express this phenomenon. The eighteenth century made a god of Reason. The nineteenth adored Science. Our twentieth century burns incense before the altars of Life.

Existentialism

Within the anti-intellectualistic current, Heideggerian existentialism represents the most original and important theory in contemporary philosophy.² Its thought is vigorous and profound, restless and tormented. Remote and even contradictory influences are reflected in it: Aristotle

and St. Augustine, Kant and Kierkegaard, Husserl, Scheler, and Dilthey. As a youth, Heidegger heeded Nietzsche's inspiring antirationalistic message: Loyalty to the earth. Life, the highest value. Desire for heroic and terrifying experience. Supercharging of trivial and bourgeois activity by living dangerously. Faith in force and instinct.

Heidegger also learned from Kierkegaard, the gloomy Danish thinker, who revealed to him his own tragic anguish. He had shown him his soul lacerated by extreme fears. His thirst for God, his terror in the face of nothingness, were manifest.

Heidegger, the philosopher of Freiburg, discovered the secret of the modern soul; the goal of Faust's unending search. Man is a transitional being, contradictory and mysterious, an idealist and a skeptic, dreamer and cynic, mystical and sensual, a being combining in senseless activity a pessimistic will with monotonous living. Such a disconcerting truth and such a deep penetration into the heart of the period have popularized Heidegger's enslaving thought, which in less than fifteen years has caught the attention of the cultural world. And all this in spite of an occult and obscure terminology.

Frightful and unprecedented wars, profound and repeated crises have stamped on the face of our time the seal of anxiety and anguish. And along the highways of this menaced existence Heidegger observes men to be slaves to duty, victims seduced by the present. They are preoccupied by a thousand demands for living. In attempting to stifle the silent and secret voice of their conscience amidst the tumult of a crude and meaningless life, they have surrendered to clamor and disgust. Heideg-

ger, a man of character, could neither satisfy himself nor justify man, the product of this materialistic civilization which knows no other god than finance nor cherishes any other ambition than this life's comfort. There is no justification for that man who flees from himself, seeking refuge in a banal and bourgeois existence. Heidegger stamps his anathema on this man and on those degraded existences which never reach maturity.

Then he analyzes the life of a philosopher, a man who knows himself and confesses to himself all his tragic limitations and helplessness. He is the man who, conscious of his faults and inabilities, embraces his destiny and faces his historical and temporal existence with resignation. The philosopher should build up his pride and boldly confront his tragic existence, which is balanced every moment over nothingness where the sentinel of death waits impassably. Man lifts himself like a reef over the darkness of chaos. Nothingness is a part of his essence. Time's intangible footprint marks the meaning of his being. It weaves the cloth of his existence. Man's being is time, an historical happening, finite and temporal. Wearied by worry and having surrendered to the trivial life, man hearkens to the silent voice of his conscience. Reflecting on himself he recognizes his tragic weakness, finite and helpless. He discovers and conquers himself by defeating the horror of death. He accepts his destiny. In this way he achieves his essence and personality in an integral way.

Heidegger's idealistic analysis does not succeed in defining the limits of the subjective conscience. He had intended to sketch a philosophy starting from man. Yet his metaphysics knows no other dimension than time, no

other horizon than the world, no other reality than concrete existence. His ontology sinks into empiricism and the irrational contingent. Existential ontology carries the stigma of positivism and idealistic subjectivism. While incorporating irrationalism into his system, Heidegger adopted Kant's transcendental method. In place of pure reason he established concrete existence as a base or starting point for all philosophizing. Heidegger was not afraid to deduce by force of logic the extreme consequences which Kant himself did not dare to draw out of his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Heidegger reduced all faculties to the sensible order. Intellect and reason must be rooted in and determined by transcendental creative imagination operating here and now. The insurmountable barrier raised by Kant between pure and practical reason crumbles before the Heideggerian battering-ram. In this system, despite his protestations, the moral order determines ontological order. Action is merged with being.

Nevertheless, the existential analysis cannot of itself judge values. It is unable to afford a solid base for ethics. Heidegger, attentive to nothing but concrete human existence, cast out all suprasensible and supramundane reality from the field of metaphysics. Also, in his criticism of practical reason Heidegger goes further than his master. Of the three postulates of practical reason he admits only liberty. God and human immortality are rejected. It is true he affirms that anguish is the existential way to reach the transcendental order. Yet this transcendency, as it emerges from Heidegger's writings, has a purely mundane character. For existential ontology revolves about these two poles: the Ego—the World, one reality: human existence. And while there is no lack of refer-

ences which seem to allude to an ultramundane dimension (*Faktizität, Geworfenheit, Verfallenheit, Nichtigkeit*: chance occurrence, helplessness, decadence, nullity), the agnostic-positivistic premises which shackle the intellect to the useful and the sensible, the central idea of temporality as the meaning of existence, the concept of nothingness as an integral element of human existence, finally, the definition of transcendency as a condition of possible existence, all induce one to incline toward the belief that Heidegger's metaphysical thought did not go beyond the empirical, the temporal, and the mundane. His ontology is that of empiricism, immanence, pure subjectivity. No place remains for genuine metaphysics.

Existential ontology set out to legitimize philosophically that godless life which has no further horizon than nothingness, no other hope than death. It sought a motive to make life tolerable. Heidegger, the atheist, found nothing within the obscure boundaries of the universe that would console us except a challenge to fatal destiny, a stoic gesture in the presence of our own destruction. Rather than raise his eyes to the transcendent heights, the philosopher suicidally cast himself into the arms of nothingness. The most secret purpose of Heidegger's existential ontology was to justify atheistic metaphysics. Nothingness was to be preferred to God! In the words of Landsberg, "Paradoxical mystery of extreme cruelty."

The process begun by Kant, banishing God from the speculative order and confining him to the world of sentiment, was perfected by Heidegger's denial of God's rule over human existence. The anthropocentric swing of the pendulum reached its greatest extremity in our day. The theocentric reaction is inevitable. Human thought, which

at the beginning of our century deified life, years later cast itself into the arms of nothingness. Here is a profound and pregnant truth at once frightening and sobering.

Such is the background of Ortega's thought, which appeared on the scene between the decline of Neo-Kantianism and the peak of vitalism.

II

Under the Aegis of Renan

ORTEGA'S YOUTHFUL WRITINGS ARE OF SPECIAL INTEREST. Even in his early days he showed the style, the grace, and the brilliance of a mature writer. But his evident cleverness, even though unrestrained, does not prevent us from studying his obviously sincere thought. His youth, austere and fruitful, was devoted to intellectual pursuits. He is not unmoved as he watches his youth recede. "I have taken the hand of my youth," he tells us, "like that of a faithful friend. I have gazed deeply into its eyes, and I have seen that it was not perturbed. I have pushed it into the past, and I have said, 'Goodbye, you may go in peace.'"¹

His was an exceptional youth, disturbed by metaphysical anxieties. His spirit was directed toward the important problems, toward the ultimate questions: "What is life? What is death? What is happiness?"²

Young and full of speculation, he cultivated an irrepressible longing for objectivity, for truth. Here is the dramatic moment when Renan's doubt has already under-

mined the base of Neo-Kantian idealism; only a few of the main walls remain upright. "The objective," Ortega affirms, "is the true, and it has held our interest above all else; those men will rank highest in the human hierarchy who shall have saturated their spirit with objective facts. They will be the geniuses, the classical authors, the models which will impel us to save ourselves in our work as on a few planks in a personal shipwreck of ambitions. The modesty and the complete calm, the great patience which objects display, offer us an incomparable lesson which we should follow; let us welcome them into our spiritual abode, let us establish a deep friendship with them. Let us cling to objectivity, our teachers; they are the virtuous, the true, the eternal. On the other hand, the subjective and personal are perishable, equivocal, and, in the end, without value."⁸

Things themselves are law, order, "the voice of universal substances." But let us not be deceived by words. Objectivity, law, thing, norm are idealistic concepts. "The essence of each thing," Ortega states, "is reduced to mere relations."⁴ This applies even to life, which is individual and concrete par excellence. "In the realm of the spirit," he continues, "much more than in matter it is seen how being and life are only an aggregate of relationships. . . . Every concrete being is constituted such by an infinitude of relations."⁶ "Matter itself is an idea."⁶ There exists no immutable and unique reality. "There are as many realities as there are points of view."⁷ This phrase contains the germ of the relativistic doctrine which will be found completely developed many years later in his *Modern Theme*. In analyzing his words we find a decomposing idealism corroded by skeptical doubt. Ortega's early rel-

ativism manifests itself as the inevitable product of decadent idealism.

Skeptical and pantheistic idealism offers a confused mixture of Neo-Kantian ideas combined with those of Renan. Humanity is the undefined line between the orangutan and God. Until we reach Him and until "having diluted ourselves in Him we lose the secret leprosy of subjectivity, of the individual Ego, we live in an atmosphere of error, and we are forced to prefer some errors to others in order to orientate ourselves in the least evil way possible."⁸ Renan had contaminated Ortega's adolescence with his own dismal doubt. But Ortega had imbibed the error even earlier. He admits that "Renan's books accompanied me from my childhood; on many occasions they have served me as a spiritual fountain, and more than once they calmed certain metaphysical sorrows suffered by young hearts whose solitude has made them sensitive."⁹ His long acquaintance with the works of the French author will leave an indelible impression on Ortega's later thought.

A secret desire is observable in the young author to imitate the master of charm, to mold his own heart according to his spirit. To live without absolute principles, here is the great lesson which Ortega will thoroughly learn, flitting like a fickle butterfly that goes not from truth to truth, but from truth to falsehood; for such, the point of arrival and of departure are not important, "but merely that indecisive movement from one pole to the other."¹⁰ Art, religion, myth, and poetry pertain to the world of probability, neither true nor false, supported rather by an emotional agreement. It is a universe of metaphors. Culture is mere convention. "Without doubt

the sincere, the spontaneous in man is the gorilla."¹¹ Neo-Kantian culturalism, which raised science, morality, and art to divine honors, falls with a crash at a blow from his sledge hammer. "The Muse," he tells us, "is but the romantic name which poets have given their cerebral congestions; Virtue is no more than a particular class of muscular inhibitions; Truth, as Taine affirmed, is a normal hallucination."¹²

Classicism receives the greatest praise from the young author, but it is understood as love for law, for the norm which forces biological spontaneity into a rut. Although conventional and fictitious, culture is indispensable. "At any moment when we might be sincere, the gorilla springs up in us and insistently claims his rights. Only by means of fictions and constantly changing phantasms do we keep him chained."¹³ Still more, Renan taught Ortega that fiction is all important; just as the function creates the organ, so the gesture creates the spirit and a posture facilitates dignity. "Matter," says Ortega, "is nothing; order, measure, fiction, the conventional, the posture are everything. We must exclaim with Renan: 'I like to kneel before nothingness.'¹⁴ Let us not forget this interesting confession which casts full light on certain disconcerting aspects of Ortega's later thought.

In summarizing this first period we find: an idealistic outlook disintegrating; a bitter skepticism which proposes culture as fictitious and conventional, and puts no credence in its values. It is a pervading pantheism, an ethics changing with the environment. Life is conceived in the idealistic tradition as a mere relation.

III

Life and Environment

Life, the Fundamental Reality

IN THE THREE-YEAR PERIOD OF 1914-17 WE FIND ORTEGA'S dynamic thought in an acute transitional phase. Thanks to his youthful writings we were able to view the fierce battle which raged between Renan and Neo-Kantianism in his own mind. *Las Meditaciones del Quijote* and the first volumes of the *Espectador* reveal to us a new Ortega whose features hardly preserve any resemblance to his youthful characteristics. His anti-idealistic tendency was accentuated in a way which temporarily seemed to save the frontiers of realism. He espoused the perspectivistic theory that will reach full maturity in his book, *The Modern Theme*. In one phrase he fashioned his philosophical motto: "I am myself and my environment."¹ Life monopolized his attention, became the necessary goal of his reflections.

How is such a notable change to be explained? Citations from Bergson and Nietzsche increased. That tragic Danish figure, Kierkegaard, is also admitted into the inti-

mate circle of his readings. The Spanish atmosphere, realistic to an excess, the blue transparency of his heaven, was poorly reconciled with the idealistic mists. The grave Spanish problems solicited his attention. His reflections and philosophical anxieties concern the grand monuments where breathes the soul of immortal Spain. He had to wear, at least for convenience, a mask of realism. In his own opinion he was still very far from the Hegelian dogma "which makes thought the ultimate substance of all reality."² He was steering the prow in a new direction.

According to Ortega the nineteenth century, critical and narrow in its viewpoint, limited its activity to the social and political fields. The life of the individual was relegated to second place, "as if it were an immaterial and superficial question." Occupation with such a problem would have been considered unpardonably trivial. Nevertheless, this attitude implied a sadly erroneous perspective. Progress, humanity, democracy—in a word, the whole culture—are merely the overflow, the by-products of life. "The philosophy of history is the rational interpretation of life, but the essence of life remains outside of this interpretation: the stuff of life is composed of the expansion and contraction of my heart. It is the sensation of primitive loneliness which now echoes within me as a moan in an immense deserted cave. It is that sudden illumination in which the world seems to float when among the sounds of merriment the cherished voice, the voice which is a thread of silver, whispers in my hearing the perfume of one word. . . . Ah, and this immediate life, these emotions of each individual are for each one the most important thing in the universe. Whether you wish it or not, all else is secondary and exists only in as

much as it depends on our heart and is expressed in it.”³

Disgusted with abstractions of utopian and schematic worlds, Ortega turned his eyes to the living reality which surrounded him, to the “circumstances,” in the original meaning of that Latin root, to the mute objects in his immediate vicinity. Through these we communicate with the universe. Our business is to integrate our own environment into the perspective of the world. “This sector of reality surrounding me forms the other half of my person: only through this can I integrate myself and be fully myself. . . . I am myself and my environment.”⁴ This is an ambiguous phrase exalted by some commentators to a metaphysical dignity.

Culture forms a zone of unreal and abstract life floating above our ever unfortunate and questionable personal existences. We must avoid enthroning it, divinizing it. “That which we today find embellished and sublimely hallowed had in its time to contract and shrink to pass through the heart of a man. All that is today recognized as true, as exalted beauty, as supremely valuable was conceived one day in the spiritual entrails of an individual confused with his whims and fancies.”⁵

What a concealed anxiety these phrases breathe! Let us try to penetrate his secret. Having condemned the supernatural to perpetual banishment, Ortega, through Renan’s influence, has also lost his faith in culture. In his eyes culture is a mirage, a fiction. Like a distant echo Renan’s bitter confession sounds insistently: we live by illusions. How shall we live later on? Morality, art, science can no longer explain human life. What motive will man invent to make his existence tolerable and to evade death from desperation and disgust?

The Sage of the Escorial discovered life, the immediate reality which we ourselves are. But penetrating even a little into his findings we see behind the mask of a luxuriant and crudely excessive vitalism the pallid face of skeptical pessimism. He tells us that "when we have reached the depths of pessimism and we find no fact in the universe which seems able to save us, our eyes turn to the minutiae of daily life as a dying person in his death agony recalls all the details of his life. Let us understand, therefore, that it is neither great wealth, nor great pleasure, nor great ambition that supports us in life, but rather this one minute of well-being enjoyed near the hearth in winter. . . ."⁶ Man's destiny on earth is to spread light and meaning over this life. "This assignment has not been revealed by any god, nor is it imposed from without by anyone or anything. Man carries it within himself. It is the very root of his constitution."⁷ Human life is the ultimate reality.

Disdainfully and in the name of intellectual clarity he rejected all religion. In his eyes religion is "an inadequate form of culture . . . religious principles are problematical in a higher degree than the very life which they attempt to clarify and to support."⁸ Religion proposes mysteries to us; according to Ortega these are "formally insoluble problems" which lead us from the obscure into the dark. "Mysteries are the excrescences of mental obscurity."⁹

Clarity, that calm spiritual grasp of objects, is a gift bestowed on us by ideas. As the instrument of culture they provide vital spontaneity, firmness, security, and clarity. But an idea is only a sketch of objects. It captures the objective dimensions. "And these dimensions, as has been indicated, signify no more than the relation which

one object has with respect to all others."¹⁰ An impression, on the other hand, gives us the essence of a thing. These opinions are unmistakably Kantian.

The Point of View

Concrete living, only recently discovered by the philosophers, urgently required suitable apparel to present itself with dignity in the world of thought. Faced with skepticism which denies the existence of truth and opposed by rationalism which from an abstract viewpoint rejects the individual and speculates on the truth, the *Espectador* proposes a third solution: the individual point of view, the theory of perspective.

That which above all else interested Ortega was life as it flowed before him. "The individual point of view," he said, "seems to me the unique point of view from which the world can be truthfully seen. Anything else is counterfeit. . . . Reality, precisely as such and as detected outside our individual minds, is able to reach our minds only by multiplying itself in a thousand facets or actions."¹¹ Reality is able to be seen only from the point which each person inevitably occupies in the universe. Each man has an assignment to seek truth. Where my eye is, there is no other. That portion of reality which my eye sees, no other eye sees. We and our perception are necessary, irreplaceable. "Each race of humanity and each individual within each race is an organ of perception distinct from all others and like a tentacle which seizes parts of the universe unattainable by other men."¹² Reality, the universe, life, call it what you will, "is broken

into innumerable facets and shadings, each one of which is facing an individual. . . Reality, then, is presented to us through individual perspectives."¹³

In other words, all truth is relative to an individual and to his space-time perspective. All metaphysics which speculates with abstractions outside of time and space is utopian, fictitious. Our knowledge is conditioned on the implacable environment in which we live. It is impossible to evade our surroundings. Every man is inevitably condemned to know determined truths, to be ignorant of others. Ideological battles are useless. "Instead of disputing let us combine our views in a generous spiritual collaboration, and as the independent rivulets are united in the wide stream of the river, let us integrate the torrent of reality."¹⁴

In short, this doctrine holds that each individual thinks and believes whatever his environment suggests, and he is correct in so doing. All men possess the truth. Every man sees a distinct zone of reality or the same zone in the light of a different perspective. There is neither truth nor error, but only the discrepancy of perspectives. This is complete relativism.

IV

The Modern Theme

Relativism and Rationalism

"THE MODERN THEME" CRYSTALLIZED ONE OF THE MOST characteristic phases of Ortega's versatile and dynamic thought. Cultural features of historical ages are conditioned, according to Ortega, on the vital perceptions of a given generation. Each generation possesses its own typical characteristics, its fundamental attitude toward life. From these it derives its own agenda and peculiar historical accomplishment. The new vital perception of an age is first sketchily presented in the ideology of the select minority. "That which tomorrow will live in the city streets depends on today's thought."¹ A secret relationship exists between cultural activity and the various generations or eras.

But, Ortega asks, shall we say that science and especially philosophy are a group of convictions which have value as truth for only a limited time?² Truth is a dramatic problem! It pretends to be one and unchangeable. Yet human life "has continually changed its opinions,

though each opinion when adopted was consecrated as truth." It is possible to correlate truth, one and eternal, with "human living which is in its essence changeable and inconstant from individual to individual, from race to race, from age to age"?⁸ History asserts that truth does not exist, that there are merely truths relative to each individual. Such is the relativistic solution. Nevertheless, relativism, in Ortega's opinion, is ultimately skepticism, and skepticism, logically opposed to every theory, "is a suicidal theory." Relativism is a "calamitous experiment."⁴ In the face of relativism, rationalism arises as a champion of truth. To save truth it disowns life. Absolute and eternal truth cannot be postulated of a corrupt and finite individual. An abstract, rational entity, common to all men, must be supposed.

It must be noted that rationalism, to which the Sage of the Escorial refers, was created by Descartes and evolved with variations by Spinoza, Leibnitz, and Kant. Aristotelian intellectualism was not even considered by Ortega. This should surprise no one who recalls the unfeigned contempt which Aristotelianism has evoked from him. To Ortega this system is no more than an elixir of the kind "which men invent to escape work . . . Let us withdraw courteously, though somewhat bored, from these quacks who offer it to us."⁵

Against the rationalists' claim of an absolute truth Ortega points to the errors of the human mind throughout history. How is it possible, he says, for "humanity to dream of a millennium while embracing the greatest possible diversity of errors? How can we explain the multitude of opinions and tastes which, depending on the age, race, or individual, have governed history?"⁶

Such an attitude of mind, suspicious and disdainful toward all that is spontaneous and living, yet enthusiastic for things geometrical and rational, appears today, according to Ortega, insolent and narrow. Our era disregards the dilemma proposed by rationalism in defense of reason. Ortega holds that "we can give our approval to neither of the two positions; and when we attempt it, we feel mutilated."

If we attempt to discover the motives behind men's conduct, we observe that in substance the highest criterion of truth is loyalty to the historical moment. If other men in earlier times thought in a different way, that must be attributed to the fact that their perception was distinct from ours. Ortega wished to defend the laws of life condemned for centuries by rationalism. He tried to reconcile the interests of reason and of living.

Culture and Life

Before attempting to solve the thorny problem of truth Ortega invites us to consider a few preliminary ideas. He aims to reveal clearly the nature of culture. He asserts as of prime importance the fact that thought is a vital function like digestion or circulation of blood. Yet from another viewpoint, to think is to bring to our attention objects as they exist. Thought, therefore, can be considered in two ways. As a vital act it obeys the law of personal utility. As an objective phenomenon it is a representation of things. The tone of these propositions is frankly realistic. "In the intellectual process, then, I do not succeed in adjusting myself to myself, nor in being useful to myself,

if I do not adjust myself to that which I am not, to things around me, to the transorganic world, to that which transcends me. . . . To be true, thought must coincide with its objects, with that outside of me. But at the same time I have to think that thought in order that it may exist. I have to cling to its truth, to lodge it deeply into my life, to make it immanent in the small biological world which I am."⁸

For the first time Ortega's thought comes forth free of idealistic fog. As he himself confesses, when he studies objects in themselves, manifested by reality free from prejudice and false theories, human life presents itself "as a phenomenon certain of whose immanent functions transcend itself." Life is a transcendency beyond one's self.

After reading the above quotations anyone might think that the Madrid philosopher had once and for all entered the camp of realism. Nothing could be more misleading. In later pages we find the following assertion: "Of Kant's work one great discovery will remain imperishable: Experience is not merely the mass of data transmitted by the senses, but rather a product of two factors. Sensible data must be gathered, registered, organized into an orderly system. This order is caused by the subject; it is *a priori*."⁹

From the foregoing analysis Ortega concludes that culture is a group of subjective, living functions endowed with the power of being adapted to a suprasensitive order. Culture possesses its own proper value. "The just act should be performed even though it does not harmonize with life. Justice, truth, moral rectitude, beauty are things valuable in themselves, and not only in that measure in which they are useful to life."¹⁰ Vital activity, when trans-

formed into the spirit, into culture, acquires its own validity. Yet, to Ortega the spiritual is not an incorporeal substance, a reality, but a quality which some things possess and others do not. It is had by an object that has a meaning, a value in itself. But how is it that justice, being a product of mere subjective vitality, acquires an independent value in such a way that it should be obeyed even though it fails to harmonize with life? Here is a serious problem which Ortega passes over.

This exposition implies that life has a double aspect: the biological and the spiritual. Hence, Ortega concludes that "life should be cultivated, but the culture must be vital. . . . Any unbalanced condition in favor of one or the other leads irreparably to degeneration."¹¹ Such is the formula on which Ortega relies to solve the ancient conflict between reason and life, the dilemma proposed by relativism and rationalism.

Life, the Supreme Value

Yet his antirationalistic reaction dragged Ortega further than he wished, into complete irrationalism. He converted intelligence into a function of a living organism. Culture is a mere biological instrument. "The modern theme," he says, "is to subject reason to living, to localize it within the biological field, to subordinate it to the spontaneous."¹² "Pure reason must yield its supremacy to vital reason."¹³

Until now life has been considered as valueless. The Buddhist would see it as the fountain of sorrow, anxiety, insatiable desire. Nirvana, the loss of all personal con-

sciousness, is the highest good. For the Christian the value of existence is extrinsic to it. The highest good rests in the possession of God. According to Ortega modern times represent a crusade against Christianity. It was science's task to achieve the de-Christianization of the world. "By the middle of the eighteenth century the Christian concept of life had evaporated. Men were left with only this life."¹⁴

Although anti-Christian, the thought of the last two centuries adopted a viewpoint very similar to that of Christianity. Modern man made a god of culture. Culturalism is an atheistic Christianity. Life in itself is indifferent and "becomes valuable only as an instrument and substratum of the ideal world of cultural values."¹⁵

Our tactics must be changed. Our attitude must be reversed. Instead of life for culture, Ortega proclaims "culture for life." That the immanent values of existence have not been previously discovered is due to the peculiar nature of existence. Living consists in devoting one's self to that which is not life. "Desire," says Ortega, "that function of life which best symbolizes the essence of everything else, is a constant striving of our being toward that which is beyond it; an untiring archer, it drives us unceasingly toward attractive targets. In the same way thought is always concerned with objects outside itself. . . ." ¹⁶ For this reason transcendental values are not the source of life's meaning and vindication, "but on the contrary, the remarkable generosity of life itself, which prompts us to become enthusiastic with something outside itself."¹⁷ Life is valuable for its own sake. Life chooses and classifies values. To prove this assertion Ortega offers two examples: a pure-blooded horse typifying

the ideal, and the magnificent human natural beauty. In his opinion the appraisal is on norms of mere vitality. In vain we read between the lines in search of an argument which supports the proposed thesis, or which suggests a vitalistic monism. "Objects which are coveted," he says, "objects in which we believe, things which are respected and worshipped have been created about our personality by our own organic faculties and constitute a kind of biological sheath united inseparably to our body and to our soul."¹⁸ Culture (science, religion, philosophy) is a creation of human life.

The discovery of vital values immanently joined to life, while a brilliant insight in Goethe and Nietzsche, is a reality in our day, if we are to believe Ortega. The presence of this new perception of life's values on the horizon of Europe has provoked a strange phenomenon which might well be called a loss of vital orientation. Western man has lost his way. "He does not know how to navigate his life according to the stars." Ortega reminds us that thirty years ago the great majority of Europeans lived a cultured life. Now things are different. An unmistakable symptom of the new outlook is contemporary art. In Ortega's opinion it is revolutionary, unpopular, frivolous, and without value. These notions he develops years later in his *Dehumanization of Art*.

A new light has transformed the ancient cultural perspective. It is life considered as the supreme value. Reason and culture acquire a secondary and subordinate value.

Truth and Perspective

But his initial theme, the urgently demanded solution to the dilemma proposed by reason and life, is again reviewed with restless insistence. A surprise awaits us. Ortega, who had just bestowed on life the highest value, is not now embarrassed to affirm that biological and cultural value should remain "face to face with equal titles, without subjection of one to the other."¹⁹ And immediately afterwards he repeats the famous rational-relativistic dilemma already conquered, in his opinion, by the sensitivity of the modern world. And while we impatiently await a final solution, we learn that the old relativistic ideas learned from Renan still exert their influence and dictate the last word.

Faced with relativism and rationalism, "the facts," he says, "impose a third opinion, an exemplary synthesis of both. When a sieve or a net is placed in a current, it allows some things to pass and blocks others. While it may be said to select, it will not be said to deform. This is the function of the subject, of the living being with relation to the cosmic reality which surrounds him. Nor does the living being allow the cosmic reality easily to pass through him, as would happen to the imaginary rational being created by the rationalistic definitions. Nor does he feign an illusory reality. His function is clearly selective. From the infinity of elements which integrate reality, the individual, the receiving apparatus, allows a certain number to pass whose form and content coincide with the mesh of his sensible antenna. The other things, phenomena, facts, truths, remain outside, unknown, unperceived."²⁰

Hence, each individual's psychic structure is an organ open to certain truths, condemned to inescapable ignorance of others. Individuals, races, and epochs all possess their own characteristic soul, "an antenna with long range yet limited in its scope." Each man is his own perspective of the universe. That which he sees no one else can see. His point of view is essential to him, irreplaceable. Differences between the worlds of two individuals "do not imply that one is false."²¹ Complete truth is obtained by combining partial perspectives.

Two conclusions are drawn from this theory. All truth is relative to an individual and to an era. "The doctrine of the point of view demands . . . that within the system the vital perspective be integrated with that from which it has emanated."²² Consequently, abstract metaphysics is absurd, utopian, unhistorical. Suprasensible realities accessible only to reason are condemned to eternal banishment. On the other hand, recognition is given to historical relativism, which conceals under the mask of modernity the tragedy of extreme skepticism.

What value Ortega himself awards to his own famous theory of perspectivism the reader may judge from a typical case. As an appendix to his work, *The Modern Theme*, we find a brief essay written with Ortega's well-known elegance and polish. It is entitled "El Ocaso de las revoluciones." In it the Madrid philosopher asserts that the root of revolutionary phenomena is found in a certain inclination of the intelligence. This consists in subjecting the complex social life to an abstract idea. He then sketches what he calls a physiology of revolutions: how from a traditionalist state one passes to a rationalist order and from this to a regime of mysticism. But what

is interesting in his eyes and even disturbing is that this scheme or law is fulfilled in every known sphere of history. Revolutions acquire, then, in his own words, a character of cosmic law, of universal scope.²³ Does this not state an abstract law, a universal truth indifferent to time and space, superior to all perspective and point of view?

Conclusion

Ortega boldly attacked the problem of truth. He was satisfied by neither the relativistic solution, because it was skeptical, nor by the rationalistic, because it was unhistorical. His thought seemed to escape the prison of idealism. It even came to adopt phraseology obviously realistic. Yet under the ominous influence of Faust and Zarathustra it intoned the passionate hymn to life. Reason enslaved to living is tied to the cart of Dionysus. Pure reason must yield its supremacy to vital reason. Nevertheless, Ortega's undeniable talent told him he had gone too far. He wrestled with his doubts, the terrifying, skeptical doubts which he had drunk in as a youth while reading Renan. He rejected irrational vitalism. In vain he tried to find a formula which would harmonize reason and life. It was a useless quest. His contempt for intellectualism led him to founder on the inevitable reefs of relativism.

V

The Crusade against Idealism

A Fugitive from Kantianism

ORTEGA'S ESSAYS ON "KANT" AND "FILOSOFÍA PURA" ARE more a pretext for launching his own ideas than an analysis of Kantian thought. The first of these essays manifests a tendency to explain Kant's genius from the relativist's viewpoint. Transcendental idealism would be the necessary product of Kant's German soul.

After ten years of seclusion Ortega claimed to have escaped from the Kantian prison and even from its influence. Nevertheless, he boasted of his captivity now that that experience had permitted him to understand clearly the meaning of our time. And with the joy of a prisoner freed from his bonds he delights in returning to the place of his suffering and invites us to accompany him to his former cell.

To Ortega, Kant was an introvert who refused to face reality. He was diffident and suspicious, concerned not with knowing but with knowing that he knew. His philosophical reflection confined him to the field of epistemol-

ogy. This frame of mind was due, in Ortega's opinion, to the fact that while ancient philosophy flowered from confidence and was born of warriors, modern philosophy, child of suspicion and caution, was born of the bourgeoisie. The decisive factor for understanding Kant is his completely German background. The German soul suffers from metaphysical isolation, from congenital introversion. The man of the South is a man of the streets open to a thousand allurements from reality. Hence it is that the soul of the South tends to build its philosophy on the exterior world.

The German, on the contrary, blind to objective reality, does not see the real directly in itself, but reflected in his Ego, transformed into an act of consciousness, into an image or idea. The German is temperamentally an idealist. To see the landscape "he leans over the edge of a pond and looks for it there mirrored in the depths, converted into a liquid phantasm which the wind ruffles and ripples."¹

Such an extreme subjectivism reaches immeasurable proportions in Kant, if we are to believe Ortega. Kant suffered from ontophobia: a secret terror of being in itself. His *Critique of Pure Reason* pictures the battle of "a lonely Ego seeking to enjoy the society of a world and of other Egos. But it finds no other medium for achieving its desire than to create it within itself."²

After four centuries of investigating the world of subjective idealism, man today, as Ortega says, "has discovered that he was in error." Ortega revealed in his gentle teacher, Kant, the silhouette of the Viking who transformed philosophy from contemplation to construction. To know is to decree. The object should prevail

over the understanding. Kant introduced into philosophy the activistic, dynamic, voluntaristic principle. His attitude reminds Ortega of "the magnificent blond barbarians who one day raided the sunny plains to the south."

The True Kant

Ortega prided himself on having conquered transcendental idealism. Kant's thought is no longer a living theme for our time. "Neither is his critique, which is less precise than ours; nor his idealism, which today seems to us diseased with subjectivism."⁸ Kantianism for Ortega was obsolete. On the other hand, the great problem which Kant first glimpsed and touched, "but which he did not conquer," has survived—the problem of being.

What is being? To Ortega this question is equivocal. On the one hand, it indicates who is being, or the subject of being. Philosophical speculation from Thales to Kant has done nothing but respond to this enigmatic enquiry. Nevertheless, the question can have other meanings. Not "who" is, but "what" is being itself as predicated. Before Kant, being was the property of an entity. And since this was always an object or a thing, being indicated the most abstract quality of the thing, being in itself, the mere capacity for existing.

The *Critique of Pure Reason* taught that things are not something real that exist independently of the subject, but products of the immanent activity of intellectual categories and sensible forms. From this it follows that being is our activity, our production; that is, being is not a reality in itself, but the relation to a thinking subject.

But the fact that being is thought did not oblige Kant, according to Ortega, "to adopt an idealistic solution."⁴ Neither Ortega's Neo-Kantian teachers nor perhaps present-day philosophers have grasped this point. Nevertheless, the development of the Kantian system tended of itself to subjective idealism. Ortega believes that the fact that "thought intervenes in the being of things by bringing them into existence, does not imply that the entities, the things, on coming into existence or going out of existence are converted into thought. . . ."⁵ And he clarifies this idea by stating that thought is one of the functions of a living person. "I think," he says, "because something in the vicinity forces me, holds my attention, because in existing I do not exist alone, but I am one thing that is preoccupied by other things, willing or unwilling. There is, then, no *moi-même* except to the extent that there are other things which must be in me or not at all. I am not they, they are not I (anti-idealistic), but neither am I without them, without the world, nor are they independent of me for whom their being and the possession of them may have a meaning (anti-realistic)."⁶ Such a position in Ortega's opinion is completely free from all subjectivism.

And as if the above were insufficient proof in favor of his anti-idealism, he proceeds saying, "things in themselves have no standard of measurement; they are immeasurable. They are neither more nor less, neither in one way nor in another. In short, they neither are nor are not. The measurement of an object, its mode of being, its characteristic of being neither more nor less, its existence in one way and not another is its being, and this being implies the intervention of man."⁷

In spite of his avowals Ortega failed to avoid the prison of idealism. Actually, if things have no measure, if they lack their own proper being, if they receive being as a gift from the intelligence, it must be concluded that the being of things is produced by a subjective operation. We are thereby in absolute idealism. This concept is idealistic, following the Fichteian school, which solves the problem of the reality of the external world not on the theoretical plane but on the practical. For Fichte the representation of the world is an essential condition for producing consciousness. Self-awareness, in proposing objects for its operation, makes objective representations arise. These are obstacles which restrict the intellect's activity. Liberty is achieved by conquering these restrictions. The external world is the image made objective by these real restrictions or limitations.

In conclusion, despite Ortega's denunciation of idealism, a calm study of his thought reveals a strain of unquestionably Fichteian lineage, subjective and idealistic.

Neither Vitalism nor Rationalism

Irrked by those who criticized his vitalism, Ortega wrote a brief essay at this period (1924) in which he again took up arms against rationalistic idealism. He rejected that philosophical vitalism which reduces "the theory of knowledge to a biological process similar to any other . . . ruled by general organic laws."⁸

Nor did he show himself more sympathetic to Bergson, who endowed life with an irrational epistemology. Hence Ortega insisted that his ideology was not contrary to rea-

son but only contrary to rationalism. Then he continued by defining (a rarity with Ortega) the outline of his philosophy "which accepts no other mode of theoretical knowledge than the rational. But it demands that the problem of life be placed at the center of the ideological system."⁹ Then he enumerates a series of charges against rationalism, that is, the systems of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, and Kant. He does not even mention traditional (Scholastic) philosophy. Let us hear the arguments.

Rational knowledge inquires into causes. It penetrates to the ultimate unchangeable elements. Those elements, according to Ortega, either elude discursive reason or are known by intuition, an irrational medium. "In reason itself," he says, "we find, then, an abyss of irrationality."¹⁰ Hence, he concludes that rationalism is not acceptable to any rigorous, truthful spirit since it is incapable of carrying an analysis through to its ultimate conclusions. Ratiocination is merely a combination of irrational visions. Even the principles of logic, beginning with the principle of identity, are for Ortega entirely irrational.

Yet we look in vain for the famous middle course between vitalism and rationalism which Ortega tacitly promised. We only observe that Ortega's estimation of intelligence is not very high. It bears the stamp of exaggerated rationalism. To him reason is "merely a formal operation of dissection like a simple descent from the composite to its elements."¹¹

VI

A Revealing Note

LONG AGO THE FAME OF ORTEGA Y GASSET CROSSED THE European frontiers. We can still hear the echoes of the tremendous acclaim that greeted his *Revolt of the Masses*. In a tedious note the author, ever aloof and aristocratically reserved, finally allowed his long-standing and poorly concealed bitterness to explode.

Distracted by his imagery, readers, he complained, had failed to grasp his ideas. He observed with amazement that not even his closest followers had even a remote idea of what he had thought or written. He confided to Fernando Vela, his close collaborator, his sad conviction that "almost no one, not even the closest of friends, had penetrated to the true meaning."¹ Nor was his work, *The Modern Theme*, without doubt his most serious philosophical work, spared this same discouraging reception. His famous "vital reason" had passed unnoticed. "Has there been anyone," Ortega asked, "who has tried, not to extract the most immediate consequences from that phrase, but simply to understand its significance?"²

Far from being understood, his thought is the victim

of twisted interpretations. It has been stigmatized as vitalistic despite his repeated protests. On the other hand, no one has tried to penetrate into his rational-vitalism. No one has spoken of it.

In the same note, and with an abundance of citations, Ortega refuted a more serious, though tacit, accusation. He is greatly in debt to German philosophy. And in Spain he is its apostle and propagandist. Nevertheless, he insists: "There are scarcely one or two, important Heideggerian concepts which had not previously appeared in my works, sometimes by as much as thirteen years."⁸

Here are the proofs he offers in support of his assertion. Above all, "the idea of life as restlessness, preoccupation, insecurity," expressed in *Las Meditaciones del Quijote*. The conquest of substantialism. The concept of life as relative opposition to the Ego and its environment. The construction of life as a prospection of the future. Re-absorption of the environment as the concrete destiny of the individual man.

It would be inopportune to anticipate a decision in such an interesting debate. An impartial analysis of the texts will speak for itself. It should only be noted that while Heidegger had carved into his theory a definite thought-outline, a rigid systematic structure, Ortega's thought, irresolute and of many forms, is endlessly evolving in search of new expressions. An idealist in his youth and already tainted by skeptical doubt, Ortega strove in vain to solve the tragic dilemma inexorably proposed by reason and life. When he was unable to synthesize the two into a serene equilibrium, he inclined toward relativism despite his own denials. The perspectivist theory, expressed in final form in his *Modern Theme*, sweeps away the last obstacle to historical relativism. Will the

Sage of the Escorial retrace his steps? Will he allow the relativistic and skeptical germs sown in his spirit by Renan and Nietzsche to reach full maturity?

But does Ortega reasonably lament that he is not understood? Let the reader judge for himself. We shall merely suggest some data. Perspectivism was, on Ortega's own confession, his philosophical theory during many years. About 1932, influenced by the existentialist vogue, he rejected that term as being too intellectual and somewhat dynamic.⁴ This lack of coherent and unified thought is nothing new for Ortega.

Let us glean a few citations to prove this point. The first might be from the anti-idealistic period to which we alluded in the previous chapter. "The fact that objects are in some way within us is indubitable. On the other hand, the existence of things outside ourselves will always be doubtful, questionable."⁵ Ortega here declares himself to be anti-realistic. But on the other hand, notice this next text. "I think in the measure in which I allow the laws of logic to be fulfilled in myself and in which I mold my intellectual activity to objective reality."⁶ Molding intellection to conform to objective reality supposes that objective reality determines knowledge, that it imposes its objective laws on the intellect. Nevertheless, in that same year the Spanish philosopher returned to the idealistic theme. He declared that an infinite distance lies between the idea and the object. A concept is "a miserable symbol," a scaffolding over which we try to reach reality.⁷ It being impossible to know the real, "we have no other recourse than arbitrarily to construct a reality, to suppose that things exist in a determined way. This provides us with an outline; that is, a concept or framework of concepts."⁸

The concept, man's personal instrument, "tells us nothing of the object itself but summarizes what a man can do with that object or what he can suffer from it."⁹ This is pragmatic vitalism which, Ortega seriously assures us, "has not up to now, as far as I know, been defended by anyone; but it is, in my judgment, the faultless climax of the philosophical process initiated by Kant."¹⁰ We regret that Ortega has forgotten Bergson's thesis expressed as early as 1899 in *Matière et mémoire* on the pragmatic value of the concept.

Nevertheless, it would be a naive illusion for anyone to think that after a profession of such radical idealism Ortega would abstain from new investigations in the field of realism. In an essay entitled "Historiología," he attempts the feat of integrating the Greek point of view with the modern. He endeavors to unite Aristotle and Descartes, and by joining these two to elude them both.¹¹ The purpose of the intellect, he tells us in that essay, is not to project its form over the chaos of received data, as Kant would desire, but precisely the contrary. "The characteristic of thought, its constitutive note, consists in adopting the form of its objects, in making them its principle and norm."¹² "In a word, we think with things."¹³ Someone might say that Ortega has returned to realism. Even more, he has promised to write on this subject, as attractive as it is heterodox. We are still waiting for such a work.

His brilliant essay, "La Percepción del prójimo,"¹⁴ is also in a realistic vein.

In the impartial light which these statements play upon his fluctuating and multiform thought, can Ortega y Gasset reasonably complain that he is not understood?

VII

Alogical Existentialism

New Trails

ORTEGA'S THOUGHT SUFFERED A NOTABLE CHANGE ABOUT 1930. His essays, *Meditación de la técnica*, *Esquema de la crisis*, *Ensimismamiento y Alteración*, and *Historia como sistema*, are unmistakable symptoms of a deep intellectual crisis. With rationalism discredited, his old relativistic principles get full attention thanks to a propitious alogical and existential atmosphere. Ortega used Heidegger's and Dilthey's terminology in developing his ideas. The influence of these authors, in which he was saturated, is undeniable.¹

Thus the world or environment "is primarily nothing more than a mere combination of advantages and obstacles which the pragmatic man encounters."² The world, environment, nature are nothing real and fundamental but rather interpretations of that complexity of life's advantages and obstacles. Reality is mere "interpretative intellectual reaction to that which we originally find surrounding our Ego." True reality cannot be known

by the intellect. "It has no being separate and independent from us, but its essence is completely expressed in its being and advantage or obstacle. . . ."³

The words "ego," "environment," "world" persist. But their content, their meaning is different. No less transitional is the Fichtean notion of the Ego considered as a pure activity, a design of life. This is a theory of many hues manifesting Heideggerian influence. According to this newest Ortega doctrine man is "an entity whose being consists not in that which already is, but in that which as yet is not, a being which consists in as yet not being."⁴

Outline of the Crisis

Few works offer us a surer access to the new ideas which held Ortega's attention about 1935 than *Esquema de la crisis*. Let us briefly sketch the more important topics.

The very intense crisis which has struck our era proceeds, according to Ortega, from the essential about-face made by Europeans around 1600. The mentality which created the modern man, having exhausted its possibilities, discovered its own limitations and deficiencies. A presentiment of great historical changes always precedes the events. Ortega boasts of predicting present changes twenty-five years in advance.

Confusion is a corollary to every critical era. In Ortega's opinion a crisis is "the transition which a man makes from a life attached to some things and supported by them to a life attached to and supported by other things."⁵ For this reason every crisis implies a change of

convictions regarding the world. Man does not know how to act because he finds himself not knowing what to think about the universe. Such a serious maladjustment can be catastrophic. The organization of convictions regarding the world permits man to orientate himself, to move safely in the midst of his environment. But the crumbling of ancient beliefs destroys all man's orientation. Dazed and misguided, he wanders through the tangled jungle of existence. Such a condition is intolerable. At the decline of all belief a new faith appears. But why, asks Ortega, do the crises of history develop? What causes this strange phenomenon, reappearing throughout all history, in which man shakes off his traditional culture, leaving himself stripped? Ortega replies that culture is the interpretation which the rational being gives to his life, "the series of solutions, more or less satisfactory, which he invents to surmount his vital problems and needs."⁶

Yet culture tends to free its heir from all personal endeavor. He who receives an idea is inclined to spare himself the fatigue of thinking out the idea and of recreating it in himself. Culture becomes calcified, counterfeit. Man's genuine ego lies suffocated under his social and conventional ego. In its last stage, culture ends with the socialization of man. Then the hour of crisis is at hand, the favorable opportunity to recapture the genuine ego, to attack the rigid culture and by stripping it away to make immediate contact with reality. These are the periods of reversion to nature. "For example, the Renaissance, Rousseau, Romanticism, and our whole era."⁷

The following are samples of Ortegan ideas expressed with undeniably Heideggerian overtones. To live, he says,

is to be flung into an environment regarding which man manufactures a creed. The problems of life are not primarily of an intellectual or scientific nature. On the contrary, man, finding himself bewildered in the midst of creation, feels impelled "to develop a repertory of opinions, beliefs, or personal viewpoints regarding his surroundings. To this end he organizes his mental faculties into a design of behavior toward every creature and toward his environment or universe. This design of behavior is that which we call the being of things."⁸

The intellectual life cannot be the goal of human existence, as rationalism would pretend. On the contrary, science, intelligence, culture have no other meaning than to serve as tools for living. But life itself is conceived as lacking all security, as "feeling one's self adrift in a mysterious element, foreign and frequently hostile. . . ."⁹

The Ortegian concept of being is purely idealistic, as the following citations prove. Being consists, he says, in something that has to be done, and arises "when a man finds himself facing things with which he has to deal. . . ."¹⁰ His idea of problems and their solution is not less subjective. "The solution of a problem," Ortega insists, "does not necessarily mean discovering a scientific law, but only clarifying for myself that which was my problem, immediately detecting from among the innumerable ideas respecting the problem one which I see with complete evidence to be my effective, genuine attitude toward the problem."¹¹ In this way reality remains subordinate to vital and subjective exigencies.

Historical Reason

A corollary to the depreciation of the intelligence is the excessive value given to the creative imagination, that fundamental differentiation between man and the brute. On the contrary, faith in reason is in danger. While this might seem paradoxical, Ortega states it as a fact. It is certain that physics and mathematics have achieved things of which the wildest imagination had not even dreamed. But physics has not known what to say about human problems. It knows nothing with certainty about man. "The failure of the physical reason leaves the way open for vital and historical reason."¹²

Three centuries of studies on the nature of the body and soul have not aided in explaining human reality to us. It follows, then, according to Ortega, that it is false to speak of human nature. "Man does not have a nature."¹³ Nor has better fortune fallen by chance to the sciences of the spirit. "German idealism has fallen into scandalous and irresponsible utopias." The interpretation of human life could not be more violent, arbitrary, and deceived. The error of the Gentlemen of the Spirit, as Ortega contemptuously labels German idealists, consisted in applying to the idea of spirit the ancient doctrine of being.

Fichte alone is treated with sympathy by Ortega. Fichte, the extremist, is a case apart for he touches the true being of life. It is unfortunate that his intellectualism did not allow him to see what he touched. "Hence we have that pathetic sight of a blind man stumbling along: Fichte stumbling in the mountains of metaphysics."¹⁴

Ortega invites us to deintellectualize reality, to extract from the objective order the forms projected by the intelligence. For this reason he insists on conquering naturalism as well as spiritualistic idealism, and in particular his own concept of the intellect. This intellect has no value if considered as objective reality, "but rather as functioning in a human life moved by exigencies which constitute this life."¹⁵ Human life, insofar as it is lived by each individual, is proposed as the basic fact of his new theory. But the life of each man is that which has been, life's nontransferable experience. Hence, to understand the human being, whether individual or collective, it is necessary to consider his historical background. "Life becomes fairly transparent," continues Ortega, "only in the light of historical reason."¹⁶

The real essence of man is that which has happened to him, that which he has done. Man, a transitory being essentially mobile, "has not a nature but rather a history."¹⁷ From historical reason (as the author calls vital reason, in following Dilthey) Ortega hopes for "the explanation of human reality," the solution of the ethical problem.¹⁸

With faith lost in every higher hope, in God as well as in physics and mathematics, man sees himself compelled to lean upon the only thing which remains, "his disillusioned life."¹⁹ The failure of reason has made it clear that life is the fundamental reality. But the human being, in asking himself what that unique reality is which remains for him, of what that disillusioned life consists, how he has come to be this particular being, discovers the dialectical series of his experiences. "It is found within himself as reality, as history." In history man finds his

original and genuine reason, the explanation of his existence. Such is the task which Ortega entrusts to historical reason. Up to this time no one, in his opinion, has devoted himself to seeking his rational value in history. History should explain itself without the aid of any extra-historical reason which seems to be fulfilled in it.

In short, we discover a vitalistic historicism implanted in certain ideas similar to Dilthey's. Philosophy is absorbed by history. With the supernatural, metaphysics, and all intellection discarded, man must be explained with the data offered by historical experience. Man's past will constitute his substance.²⁰ Yet, as Ortega himself wisely notes in his essay on Dilthey,²¹ that historical reason which is all-sufficient in itself and rejects all extra-historical elements contains an inevitable vicious circle.

History must be founded on a knowledge that is fundamental and a priori to man. And this knowledge should come, at least in part, from history itself. Moreover, history is not an amorphous chaos of facts, but a rational and significant elaboration of those facts. And anything significant implies a determined philosophical outlook, a specific conception of the universe.

But to understand this exceptional aspect of Ortegian thought it is helpful to remember the central theme of his *Modern Theme*. We are told that life is the supreme value, its own justification. Now then, identify life and history and you solve the enigma. As in the above-mentioned work in which Ortega affirms that life needs no considerations beyond itself to be valuable, in the same way he now asserts that history should find in itself its own justification and significance.

The Origin of the Intelligence

We find Ortega standing in front of a cage of monkeys at the zoo. The perpetual restlessness in which these prankish little animals live offers him a fertile subject for his reflection. While the brute beast, forced to be in continual sense contact with his surroundings, is unceasingly worried, disturbed, enraptured, man possesses the marvelous power of freeing himself from his environment and turning his back on the world to focus his attention within himself, to enter into himself. Compared to man, endowed with reflexive consciousness, the brute is an absolute extrovert. But if man withdraws himself from the tyrannical rule of creatures and achieves complete seclusion within himself, it is due, in Ortega's opinion, to his own effort. Thanks to his technological ability man modifies his surroundings, and by creating in his environment a margin of security is able to enter within himself.

Ortega continues by describing from an evolutionary viewpoint that which he calls the human development. "Man living in the world is in contact with his surroundings, his environment, no less than the brute. In the beginning his existence hardly differed from life in the zoo. He also lived governed by his sense knowledge, placed among creatures as one of them. Nevertheless, as soon as his environment gave him a respite, man by making a gigantic effort achieved a moment of concentration, turned his attention within himself. That is, against strong obstacles he held his attention fixed on the ideas which germinated within him, ideas which the objects produced and which are related to the behavior of these objects, that which later on the philosopher is going to

call the being of the things. For the present he considers the crudest type of idea regarding the world, but an idea which allows him to adopt a first plan of defense, a pre-conceived conduct. . . . That self-reflection, or man's entering into himself, is the fact most contrary to nature and most ultrabiological. In developing his capacity for concentration to only a slight degree, man has delayed his growth for thousands and thousands of years. The natural instinct is to dissipate oneself, to distract oneself with surroundings as the monkey in the jungle or in the cage at the zoo."²²

Still more, in thousands of years of striving man has continued fashioning his thought by means of culture, but up to the present, development of thought has not been completed, even less has the conquest been final.²³ The human being can return to barbarism.

Analysis of the above data induced the Madrid philosopher to state as a thesis that the destiny of man is primarily action. "We do not live to think, but the opposite; we think to achieve survival."²⁴ Thought is subordinated to action, to biological utility. The exercise of thinking arises in man because, having no choice but to live submerged in the world and to move among creatures, he sees himself obliged to organize his psychological activities. However, such an extreme theory frightens Ortega and he decides to be moderate. Verbally, though with little logic, he condemns the voluntarist error, "which dispenses itself from contemplation and makes a god of action." And in a concise formula he sketches the solution which in his judgment would solve the dispute between action and contemplation. "There is, then, no true action if there is no thought, and there is no true thought

unless it is duly referred to action and strengthened by its relation with action."²⁵

Considering the first phrase of the above formula, let us analyze the theory enunciated some pages above. There it was said that the existence of man in the beginning *"hardly differed from life in the zoo. He also lived governed by his sense knowledge, placed among creatures as one of them."*²⁶ That is to say, there was a time in which the activity of man was not true; it was not human but almost zoological, semibrutish. Governed by his sense knowledge, unable to reflect on himself, he lacked intellection and, as a consequence, the activity proper to man. Still more, according to Ortega's theory, man did not begin to think autonomously by his own decision. The discursive intelligence is a gift from the objects. Ortega states that actually *"as soon as his environment gave him a respite, man by making a gigantic effort achieved a moment of concentration, turned his attention within himself. . . ."*²⁷ In this same work the author had assured us that thanks to technology man had been able to enter within himself; but that also was a technical ability, that is, being capable of modifying environment in accord with its desirability, *"because he made use of every respite which objects allowed him for reflecting upon himself, for entering within himself and fashioning ideas about the world. . . ."*²⁸

Notice the confusion of concepts. We do not come to know whether man thinks because he has ideas or because objects permit him a respite which they do not grant to the brute. But Ortega saves still another surprise for us. Thought, the fruit of the force of thousands of

years of culture, is, in Ortega's opinion, human handiwork.²⁹

Let us leave our analysis at this point. It suffices for us to have shown that the Spanish philosopher defends, at least implicitly, anthropological evolution. Man would be a marvelous beast that would subject himself one fine day in the midst of the forest to the gigantic toil of manufacturing his own thought.

VIII

Reality and Fantasy

Ideas and Beliefs

EVER SINCE 1924 ORTEGA HAS BEEN PROMISING A DEFINITIVE work. But the announced book has not been published. It is true that new promises have been added to the former. And it is notable that during the course of the years the title of the projected publication has been changed. In 1924 the name "Vital Reason" was designated but changed some years later to "Living Reason." Finally the title "Dawn of Historical Reason" was adopted in 1940. But on this occasion the long waiting was not wholly in vain. As a reward for their patience Ortega presented his readers with the first chapter of his definitive philosophical opus. In passing, he explains the involuntary delay, and in a pathetic tone narrates that he has lived these last years wandering from one town to another, from one continent to another, a victim of misery pursued by infirmities which placed him at the point of death.

Let us take up this essay and accompany the author in this latest expression of his thought.

In order to capture the intellectual character of a man or of an era, there is no shorter way than to know his ideas. These, according to Ortega, may be considered from a double aspect: either as incidents which occur to a man as his own original acts or as initiated by his neighbor, or these ideas may be considered as basic beliefs which support his view of the world. Beliefs do not germinate on some fine day of a man's life. Rather they constitute the container of life; they are ideas which we *are*. For this reason there are two ideological worlds radically distinct: that of the factual ideas which we produce, sustain, and discuss; and that of the belief-ideas "which we do not produce, which in general we do not even formulate. . . ." ¹ We are merely in the beliefs. We find ourselves *with* the factual ideas but *in* the belief-ideas. On these ideas our life is fixed as on a base. They inspire our conduct; hence they influence our life, "latent as implications of that which we expressly do or think." ² Our intellectual life, wholly integrated by factual ideas, is something secondary with respect to our genuine and real life.

But what relation, asks Ortega, obtains between ideas and beliefs? The most precise scientific thought which is based on evidence does not merit the name of belief. "That which is evident," Ortega affirms, "even if it be most evident, is not reality for us; we do not believe in it." ³ The supreme truth is that which is evident, but the value itself of the evidence is for Ortega "mere theory, concept, intellectual combination." ⁴

The intellect clings to its truth automatically, mechanically. This act implies our free determination, which we may exercise by thinking about that truth. On the other

hand, reality is that with which we reckon whether we wish to or not. An unbridgeable abyss separates us from our ideas: the distance between the real and the imaginary. Ideas, then, form a world distinct from the real, a world of which man himself is the maker and for which he is responsible. In brief, objects which our thoughts propose to us, the most solidly established scientific theories, "are not reality for us, but merely and necessarily . . . ideas."⁵

Doubt and Belief

In Ortega's opinion man is fundamentally credulous. The most profound stratum of his existence is integrated by beliefs. Nevertheless, he wonders "whether beneath this most profound stratum there is anything else, a metaphysical base where not even our beliefs reach."⁶ But typically, as before every genuine metaphysical problem, Ortega passes on, leaving the question unanswered.

In the field of beliefs doubt opens a wide breach. According to Ortega this doubt belongs to the same dimension as our beliefs. Also, in a doubt one is as in an abyss. "Suddenly we feel that the solid ground has disappeared from under our feet, and we seem to fall into a void, helpless, unable to do anything to steady ourselves, or to live."⁷ It is characteristic that in a doubt we should cast ourselves upon reality, but upon a reality that is "ambiguous, double-meaning, unstable, in the face of which we do not know on what to rely nor what to do."⁸ In such a tragic situation man begins to think; man grasps his intellect as if it were a life preserver. It is the function

of ideas to substitute for the unstable and ambiguous world of doubts a world free from doubt. This is achieved "by imagining and inventing worlds." That is, new conceptions are formed regarding one's surroundings.

The rational being possesses no determined world but only troubles and joys. "Orientated by them," says Ortega, "man has to invent the world. The greater portion of it he has inherited from his ancestors and it is actuated in his life as a system of firm beliefs. But each one has to take these beliefs upon himself along with all that is doubtful and disputed. To this end he tests imaginary worlds and his possible conduct in them. Among these figments one appears to him idealistically firmer, and that one he calls truth. Yet this is basic: that which is true and even that which is scientifically true is nothing more than a particular instance of the fanciful. There are exact fantasies. Still more, only the fanciful can be exact."⁹

To sum up, then, beliefs are the things with which we unconditionally reckon even when we do not explicitly think about them. Yet regarding many situations and things we lack a firm belief, we doubt. We then have no other recourse but to mobilize our intelligence, to fashion an idea or opinion about these things. "Thus, ideas are the things which we consciously construct; we manufacture them precisely because we do not believe them."¹⁰ Yet notice that under the heading "idea" are included both commonplace and scientific, religious and artistic. The purpose of ideas is to mend the breach in our beliefs opened by doubt. Truth as well as all intellectual activity is fantasy, imagination.

Enigmatic Reality

Ideas which we form of things are no more than fanciful whims. Will they at least solidly establish our beliefs along with the genuine, definitive reality? By no means. In fact, while for us the earth is a celestial body of a definite size and construction which moves at a certain speed around the sun, for a man of the sixth century before Christ our planet was a goddess, "a divine power which had its own will and whims."¹¹ "This is enough to show us," continues Ortega, "that the genuine and primary reality of the earth is neither the one nor the other, that the celestial-body-earth and the goddess-earth are not more or less reality but two ideas. . . ."¹² The reality which for us is the earth is due, according to Ortega, to some man, to many men—our ancestors. The same can be affirmed regarding all our beliefs.

This permits us to see that the reality with which we deal and in which we believe we are living "is the work and product of other men and is not the genuine and primary reality."¹³ To discover reality it would be necessary to despoil ourselves of all present and past beliefs, to renounce all the interpretations which men have formulated regarding themselves and their lives throughout the centuries. But the earth, free from all interpretation, according to the Sage of the Escorial, "is not even an individual thing because an individual thing is one form of being, one way of behaving, something (opposed, for example, to phantasm) constructed by our mind to explain that primary reality."¹⁴ The genuine reality of the earth "has no form or mode of being. It is an absolute enigma."¹⁵ Considered in itself free of interpretations,

the earth is "an indefinite repertory of advantages and obstacles for our life."¹⁶

The fundamental reality of the universe lacks an intelligible outline. It is a complete enigma laid out before us. "To find oneself living is to find oneself submerged in an enigmatic element. Man responds to the primary and preintellectual enigma by making his intellectual apparatus function. This apparatus is, above all, his imagination. He creates the mathematical world, the physical world, the worlds of religion, morality, politics, and poetry. . . ." ¹⁷ For the Spanish philosopher the whole of culture is fantasy, fiction, mirage. Reality is an enigma. The hope of arriving at the essence of things, of capturing the substance of the real is not only illusory but absurd.

The perspectivism of Ortega's *Modern Theme* taught that thought attains true but relative aspects of reality. It illumines a small area in the infinite immensity of the unknown. The new destructive and pessimistic theory carries skepticism to madness. Objective knowledge is impossible. The most solidly established scientific theories are fantasies. The most venerable beliefs are capricious imagery. Evidence itself is fictitious.

The Origin of Beliefs

In the preceding paragraph it was asserted that what we call the external world is not objective reality but a mere fanciful interpretation; in brief, an idea. But it is not a simple factual idea, but rather an idea crystallized into belief. That is, beliefs began by "being no more than

facts or ideas in the strict sense. They arose one day as the work of the imagination of a man who reflected on them, disregarding for a moment the real world."¹⁸ Now it is no longer possible, as in the golden eras, to define truth as the agreement between the thought and the objective reality. "An idea," says Ortega, "is never equal to the thing to which it refers."¹⁹

The poetical world of art is for Ortega a typical example of the fanciful products of human imagination. It is proposed openly as the invention and work of fantasy, imagination. But what else are science and philosophy but fantasies? Actually, life for man implies doing something, responding to his enigmatic environment. It is necessary for him to know his surroundings. But since it is in itself unknowable, man invents with his imagination a determined species of reality. He experiments with an interpretation of the world, a topographical plan which allows him to orientate himself. From such dangerous adventures the human being, the eternal novice, is rewarded only by the bitter experience of his errors. Yet it is strange that the Sage of the Escorial should speak of error when he has affirmed that reality is in itself unknowable and enigmatic. To observe error implies the comparison of the true with the false. Error supposes truth. But for the skeptic truth does not exist!

But it should not be believed that for Ortega only the world of knowledge is of a fanciful character. This is but one of the internal, subjective worlds. Joined with it must be numbered the world of religion, of poetry, the world of *sagesse* or life experience.²⁰ These worlds among themselves observe a certain hierarchy which, however, is not stable. Thus the poetical world represents fantasy in the

extreme; the scientific approaches closer to the real. But if the world of science seems to us to be almost real compared to the poetic, let us not forget that science too is fanciful and that compared to reality is no more than an apparition.²¹

Under Ortega's inexorable scalpel not only ideas but also the sciences reveal their poetic, deceptive nature. Human life is a comedy. Thought is fantasy. Genuine reality is an insoluble enigma.

Such radical skepticism would be incomprehensible in a philosopher like Ortega if we were to fail to recognize certain sufficiently eloquent youthful expressions. The skeptical doubt which Renan filtered into his soul, while concealed for many years under the mask of an aristocratic and tolerant understanding, emerges at certain intervals throughout his work. Finally, with every defense shattered, he shows his characteristic and menacing self in his present writings. Recall that as a young man Ortega held that the kingdom of ideas in its religious, scientific, and philosophical manifestations was fashioned by metaphors. Culture in his eyes was conventionalism and fiction. The ancient seed transformed into a giant tree exposes its erroneous fruit to the sun. Such extreme tenets do not occupy a secondary or relatively new place in Ortegian thought. Anyone moderately familiar with Ortega's works will recognize in those ideas one of the most substantial and constant elements of his fluctuating and versatile thought.

The theme of *Ideas y creencias* was begun in his early writings and re-echoes throughout his later work. It is timidly sketched in his *Meditaciones del Quijote*. It seems diluted in the complex harmony of *The Mod-*

ern Theme. But it reappears and regains vigor in his essay on Kant. And played with continuing "crescendo" it emerges from time to time in such writings as "Las Etapas del Cristianismo al racionalismo," *Esquema de la crisis*, *Historia como sistema*, and "Del Imperio romano," finally to burst forth in *Ideas y creencias*, instilling its own passion into the whole orchestra of his life's work.

IX

Ideological Development

LET US HERE PAUSE IN OUR ARDUOUS CLIMB AND ENJOY THE wide panorama from this vantage point. Details are obscured, yet the meaning and importance of the zigzag trail is seen. Above all, it is observed that Ortega thought lacks systematic structure and inflexible logic. Irresolute and elusive, in constant metamorphosis, it never presents a sharply defined form. Attentive to the fashions of the day, highly sensitive to historical change, it marvelously reflects the current culture. Relativistic like the era, it sees essential reality in history. History is the superior science which will supplant philosophy and which is called upon to solve the previously unsolved problems of human life. Against rationalism which deified reason Ortega favors pragmatic vitalism.

It is not the function of the intellect to clarify reality, to lead us to the essence of things. Its task is more modest. Subordinated to action, it is a mere biological instrument servicing the vital needs of the man of action. One does not demand of it that it scrutinize enigmas, that it

solve with finality the unfortunate problems which existence daily strews in our path.

A more noble faculty is the imagination. The metaphor, the foundation of culture, radiates from its bosom. Finding ourselves lost in the darkness of ignorance before the impenetrable secret of existence, our imagination responds by creating fanciful worlds. In Ortega's hands human intellectual activity has been transformed into these worlds of mirage and fantasy. Not only metaphysical knowledge, but also religious convictions, age-old beliefs, become a game of dreams. The skeptical hurricane demolishes all. The disillusioned life alone escapes from the complete ruin.

Do not hope that the Spanish philosopher will shed a little light on the ultimate dramatic questions: Whence comes man? Whither is he going? Why that fierce contest of the flesh against the spirit as long as the flame of life breathes? When unexpectedly these terrible questions are placed in his way, he is seized with a secret terror and flees as before the fascination of an abyss. He takes refuge in another theme.

Let us glance down the winding trail which disappears into the distance. Disintegrating rationalistic idealism, killed by skeptical doubt, claimed Ortega's youthful loyalty. Condemned to a deceitful world, man must restrict himself to preferring some errors to others. Culture is no more than a fiction, a mere convention. About 1914 the anti-idealistic trend was emphasized. While his doctrine of the point of view was sketched years before, Ortega was now using its expressions and acquiring philosophical distinction through his theory of perspectivism. All truth is tied to one's space-time perspective. Abstract meta-

physics, which imagines it captures the essence of things in a zone beyond experience by breaking through the space-time ramparts, is utopian, unhistorical. But it should be noted that "each man sees a real aspect of the world." The immediately evident, life's environment, is raised to be the object of philosophy.

Realistic phrases are abundant in *The Modern Theme*. In the debate between rationalism and relativism, Ortega with great daring approaches truth. A sincere desire, it would seem, impels him to conquer relativistic historicism, which is, in the end, skepticism. And skepticism in Ortega's opinion is "a failure," "a suicidal theory." Nevertheless, dazzled by life, he proclaims the triumph of living values at the expense of intelligence. His solution is frankly relativistic. Every man possesses "a sensitive antenna" receptive to certain truths, closed to others.

In his criticism of Kant he continues the crusade, at least in word, against the cult of culture, against the rationalistic idealism of his early youth. His great discovery is a Kant without subjectivism and the Fichtean interpretation of being as a living theme of Kantianism. But despite his assertions Ortega did not free himself from the fetters of idealism.

There is one aspect of Ortegan thought that deserves emphasis: his antimysticism. Even in his youthful writings he warns us against the mystic. "Do not believe," he says, "anyone who tells you that the inexpressible is of the most value in man. That is a very ancient lie of the mystics and of the confused enemies of man."¹ His work entitled "Defensa del teólogo frente al místico" is well known. In it he affirms that while the mystic tends to

explore the profundities and speculates in the depths, philosophy is designed to clarify, to make patent and evident that which was hidden, mysterious, and veiled.²

There exists, then, an irreconcilable enmity between philosophical meditation and mystical illumination. Forced to choose, he does not hesitate to state "that he detests the mystery and melodramatic gestures of the initiate and of the mystagogue." In general for Ortega, the ecstatic is more or less a fanatic who lacks moderation and mental clarity. In the name of philosophy, mystical experience is condemned without appeal.

We now come to a crossroads of great importance. From about 1930, existential and relativistic historicism have the floor in Ortega's writings. The thesis of *homo faber* (the man of action) is admitted without discussion. We think in order to survive. Intelligence is a biological instrument. Genuine reality is enigmatic, unknowable. All knowledge is imagination. True knowledge of reality is impossible. As is seen, the field is prepared for skepticism.

After this it is truly pitiful to hear Ortega boast of inaugurating a new philosophical era with his own line of thought. Descartes, Kant, Fichte, Dilthey have erred. Kant glimpsed and struggled with the problem of being but failed to solve it.³ Fichte touched the true essence of life, yet his rationalism blinded him.⁴ Dilthey had an intuition of life, but he could not account for it.⁵ Goethe and Nietzsche had a remarkable intuition, but before its time. The glory befell Ortega to have dedicated himself to life with its supreme value.

But does the Ortegian solution preserve both the rights of life and the prerogatives of intelligence in a higher bal-

ance? Does he not repeat Kant's ancient process, who though intending to discover a legitimate metaphysical method ended by declaring metaphysical knowledge impossible within the limits of speculative reason? Does not Ortega's radical skepticism in branding all ideas and all beliefs as illusory and fanciful exclude rationality from the very life which he intended to defend against the excessive exactions of the rationalistic method?

SECTION TWO: THE ENIGMATIC EGO

I

The Psychic Trilogy

The Anatomy of the Soul

THERE IS HARDLY A PROBLEM IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MAN more intriguing or of more importance than that of the nature of the soul. Such coveted treasure could not pass unnoticed by Ortega, the incorrigible hunter of themes. To explore the strata of man, the intimate structure of the human being, the anatomy of the soul seems to him an enterprise as yet undertaken by no one. Let us accompany him on this extraordinary adventure.

But it should not be believed that the author will engage in the exploration of the mysterious psychical world with an impartial mind. Radical prejudices blind him. The soul, the conscience, the spirit, or whatever it may be called, is for him "a bundle of activities." Confronted by objective entities the subject is "mere activity."¹ For this reason the possibility of a spiritual substantial principle is rejected without any discussion. But let us consider his treatment.

Ortega distinguishes three psychic zones. Planted in

the corporeal, root and foundation of the person, is his vitality. In that corporeal soul the spiritual and corporeal principles are established. From it they emanate and are nourished. As life-giving sap, this soul ascends to the summit of our being. Every vigorous personality possesses a strong dose of vitality.

The core and nucleus of a rational being is his spirit. It is the most personal but perhaps not the most individual, explains Ortega, noting a distinction between the individual and the person in that the person is considered in an objective sense as opposed to the more immediate and subjective note which would be the individual. And that no one may accuse him of fraud, he then refines the meaning of the word "spirit." By this term he does not understand a metaphysical entity, occult and hypothetical, which is postulated beyond phenomena, but rather the "aggregate of those intimate acts of which each one feels himself the true author and protagonist."² And as an example he considers a voluntary act ("I want") which is opposed to a portion of my inclinations. "Those dominated inclinations are certainly mine, but they are not I." Thought is distinctive of that core of my being which is the spirit. In a strict sense we think neither with our body nor with our soul, according to Ortega. Spiritual phenomenon is instantaneous. It does not last. Each act of thought "is mental lightning." The same may be said of the will. "It is wished or not in an instant. . . . Volition, which perhaps delays in being formed, is a ray of intimate activity which flashes its decision."³

By stretching such a bridge between the vitality, rooted in the corporeal, and the spiritual, the soul is found. "Between the vitality, which is in a certain way subconscious,

obscure, and hidden, which extends to the depths of our person as a landscape extends into the background of a picture, and the spirit, which acts instantaneously in thinking and wishing, there is a middle region clearer than the vitality, less illuminated than the spirit and having a strange atmospheric character. It is the region of sentiment and emotion, of desires, impulses, and appetites: that which in the strict sense we are going to call the soul."⁴

Although the acts of the spirit are instantaneous, whatever pertains to the soul is lasting and prolonged in time. Desires and sentiments ebb and flow. The spirit is not the soul. Actually, the proper function of the will is to decide, to choose from among the various inclinations. Sorrow and dislike take hold of us against our will; they surprise us, arising even though we have not caused them. The personal source, then, whence dislike as well as sorrow issues and springs forth, is distinct from the psychical something which we call ego."⁵ Consequently, the impulsive springs forth and dies in ourselves with no relation to our will. "My impulses," continues Ortega, "inclinations, loves, hates, desires are mine, I repeat, but they are not I. The ego assists them as a spectator. It intervenes in those acts as a chief of police. It pronounces sentence over them as a judge and disciplines them as a captain. . . ."⁶

The Genuine Ego

Facts imposed on Ortega, if we are to believe him, the division of the living being into the three above-men-

tioned zones of vitality, soul, and spirit. Hence, man possesses three distinct egos, although they are indissolubly united. The discovery of this psychic trilogy proposed to the Madrid philosopher an enigmatic question which impelled him toward considerations "of great subtlety where we touch as from without, realities and problems of dramatic cosmic import."⁷ Of those three egos which is genuine?

Rational activity functions by adapting itself to objective norms. "I think," says Ortega, "in the measure in which I allow the laws of logic to be fulfilled in myself and in which I conform my intellectual activity to the being of things. For this reason pure thought is of the same principle in each individual."⁸ As much must be said of the will. That which discriminates some men from others is not the spirit. By thinking and willing we participate in a universal orbit. "The spirit does not rest in itself but has its roots and foundation in that universal and transsubjective orbit."⁹ A pantheistic coloring is noticeable in this phrase.

On the contrary, feelings and emotions are acts of the personality, the individual. My sorrow is mine. In brief, while the spirit identifies us with all men, it prescinds from the singular. The soul forms a privacy closed against the universe. It lives by itself without depending on any objective world. "To think is to go outside oneself and to immerse oneself in the region of the universal spirit. To love, on the other hand, is to remove oneself from all that is not self and by personal initiative and at one's own peril, to place that peculiar sentimental act."¹⁰

Vitality for its part cannot be the genuine ego. Forces beyond the individual, as species and inheritance, act

upon vitality. The instincts form a vital repertory complete and perfect "which the body receives as an actor takes up a script written by the author."¹¹ To Ortega vitality is "like a channeled cosmic torrent. That is, there is but one universal vitality of which each organism is but a moment or pulsation."¹² The analogy to Bergson's theory is remarkable.

To summarize: the most intimate ego, the most personal, the most individual is the soul. The importance of this selection is incalculable. Intellectual and volitive activity is not the most decisive for the rational being. It is not the genuine ego. Sentiments, emotions constitute man's true self. A great and occult transmutation of values is here marked. With intelligence's supremacy undermined, priority is granted to emotion and sentiment, to the obscure and impulsive forces.

Three years previously, in a work entitled "Las Atlántidas," Ortega proposed the present theory but still in outline form. He there states: "When we reason, we greatly resemble one another. This fact reveals that in reasoning the most profound and complex qualities of our personality do not take part."¹³

The Genuine Ego (continued)

Years later, in the seventh volume of the *Espectador*, he again takes up this interesting subject. In ancient rationalism the true and principal character was the ego which reasoned and resolved. But according to Ortega, that ego is, strictly speaking, identical in all men. The rational ego is ubiquitous and generic, functioning ac-

according to general and objective laws. The soul, on the other hand, desires, loves, hates, is made happy. . . . Between these two faculties there is a perpetual and irreconcilable hostility. It is the task of the spirit to govern the automaton soul. It would be useless to object that a faculty which deliberates, governs, and guides is under every aspect superior to the passive emotions. In his ideological excursions Ortega travels so rapidly that he cannot probe the depths of any question.

In this new dispute emotion is awarded a second victory over intelligence.

With the same haste Ortega alludes to another of the most difficult of psychological questions: the union of the soul and the body. The body and soul are united in a peculiar fashion. An indissoluble unity exists between them. The human body is intended as a representation of the soul. "The flesh is an expression, an evident symbol of a hidden reality. Flesh is a hieroglyph. Its expression is like a cosmic phenomenon."¹⁴ To Ortega one of the great mysteries of the universe is the basic fraternity between soul and space. Psychophysical parallelism, or the theory of mutual influence, does not satisfy him. "This is to view the question from only one angle and to be condemned to a dilemma between spiritualism and materialism." Ortega's solution of such a perplexing problem is "the symbolic function, the world as an expression of the soul."¹⁵

But the seventh volume of the *Espectador* still has a surprise for us in a note of the last article: "Our body and our soul are not our person. Person is rather the character," says Ortega, abandoning, it would seem, the theory of the soul as the genuine ego.¹⁶

II

Psychological Actualism

Who Am I?

ABOUT 1930 THE THEME OF THE EGO ENTERS THE SCENE with new trappings revealing some previously untouched phases. He no longer inquires into the question: in which of the three zones resides the genuine ego? Now he is investigating who that mysterious character might be who anonymously hides his real face from us. Boldly Ortega dives into the psychical fauna. He leaves behind the body, the soul, the consciousness, the character. None of those is the ego. You, my friend, he tells us, "do not consist of your body, neither of your soul, character, or consciousness. You have found yourself with your body, with your soul, with your character determined in the same way that you have found yourself with a fortune left you by your parents, with the land in which you were born and the human society in which you live. As you are not your liver, healthy or unwell, neither are you your memory, competent or defective, nor your will, strong or lax, nor your intelligence, sharp or dull. The ego which you are had simply found itself living with these corporal and psychical characteristics."¹

The soul, which years later will constitute the genuine ego for Ortega, at this period seemed to him to be as extrinsic to himself as the landscape surrounding that which he admires. Tired of the search, as hard as it is useless, we examine the psychical horizon without finding even a vestige of the enigmatic being. Ortega argues that it is a traditional supposition that the ego is to be found among creatures. The ego is not any thing. "It is simply that which has to live with things, among things. . . . Life signifies the inexorable impulse to achieve the design of existence which each one is."² The ego is not something stable, substantial, but a plan, idea, design of existence. In other words, the ego is the series of its actions, the psychical current of action. That design which constitutes the self is not devised and freely chosen by man. It precedes all ideas of the intellect and all the decisions of the will. Perhaps we do not even have a true idea of it. Nevertheless, that design is our genuine being, our destiny.

Environment can be hostile or favorable to us. Hence the drama of life. Life is "the frenzied battle with creatures and even with our own character to achieve the being which we are designed to be." Human life is presented to itself as a problem. It consists in something that has to be done to itself—which is not a thing but an absolute yet undetermined task. Hence the imperative need of deciding in each instant what one will do in the next instant. For this future act the design of being must be discovered. This is the program of activity which constitutes the outline of your conduct. "Now we understand," says Ortega, "why the ego is inaccessible when we search for it."³ The search is an intellectual operation.

Only objects are sought, but the ego is nothing but activity and a program of life.

The Ego Program

This exceptional view of the self as a subjective creation and program we find sketched in Ortega's earlier writings. Thus in his "Filosofía pura" the premises are announced, but the conclusion is not deduced. There he tells us that the subject determines the being and that that same subject has no being in itself. From this we conclude that the subject, being no more than mere activity, creates itself in each act. Only many years later in his *Revolt of the Masses* do we find a reference to this subject. The reference is interesting for its Heideggerian tone. It should not be forgotten that our study has advanced to 1930. The consecrated phrase, "I am myself and my environment," gives way to a new interpretation. "Environment and decision are the two fundamental elements of which life is composed."⁴

But to his *Mission of the University* falls the honor of being the standard-bearer of his new ideas expressed explicitly and in a definite order. The very words with which the author invites us "to read with care and to meditate the compressed foreshortening" reveal its importance. In a schematic form there is first of all an exposition of his famous theory amply developed years later in *Ideas y creencias*. Culture is the mass of living ideas which each age possesses. Inevitably man "always lives according to determined ideas which constitute a terra firma on which he bases his existence. That which

I call living ideas, or ideas according to which one lives, are neither more nor less than the repertory of effective convictions regarding the world and one's surroundings. . . ."⁶

Later on he comes to the theme of life as a task, as something to do, of which knowledge is the simple, vital instrument. Life, says Ortega, "is not given to us ready-made, but, whether we wish it or not, we have to live it by making decisions instant after instant."⁷ That implies design, an idea regarding the world. Actually, "man is not able to live except by reacting at his first view of his environs and of the world by forming an intellectual interpretation of this world and of his possible conduct in it."⁷

These ideas will be developed later in *Esquema de la crisis*, *Meditación de la técnica*, and *Historia como sistema*.

III

Psychological Actualism (Continued)

Life of Principle and Banal Life

THE YEAR 1933 MARKED A TURNING-POINT IN ORTEGA'S ideological evolution. The existentialist and alogical topics, which before this had timidly and sporadically manifested themselves, now cast aside all pretense and infiltrated everywhere. *Esquema de la crisis* and *Meditación de la técnica* were written at this time. In the first of these the theme of life insistently re-echoes as a drama, as complete insecurity in a mysterious and hostile element. Life is considered as a decision which demands a repertory of convictions regarding environment. It is immeasurably more important that those convictions be genuine. They should be forged by the subject himself by previously entering into himself and reflecting. Whoever allows external objects and foreign opinions to influence him is not himself. He lacks authenticity and lives a false existence. "We fear our life," continues Ortega, "which is a solitary thing and we flee from it, from its authentic reality, from the effort which life demands,

and we swindle our genuine being for the sake of other beings, for society."¹

Oblivious of himself, man takes refuge in the anonymous and irresponsible mob. He lives by what is said and by what is done. He supplants his own ego with the anonymous and irresponsible ego of the rabble. He falsifies his existence. These ideas are almost identified with those of Heidegger's "life of principle" and "banal existence."

More explicit still is his essay *Meditación de la técnica*, intended by Ortega to be a resplendent sheaf of clear and distinct ideas concerning the disputed problem of technology. Western man, says Ortega, long ago "lost all hope in literature and came to hunger and thirst for clear and distinct ideas about important matters."² By technology the Spanish philosopher understands "the reform which man imposes on nature to satisfy his needs";³ his artificial heating, for example, his architecture, his agriculture. Technical operations seek, above all, to satisfy man's fundamental needs and, of course, with the minimum of effort. They create, moreover, new possibilities "by producing objects which are not in man's nature. Thus man navigates, flies, talks with the other side of the world by means of the telegraph or radio."⁴

Differing from the brute, man is not content with merely living. "Life for him means not simply to be but to be well." Man has no earnest desire to be in the world; "his desire is to be well."⁵

But what does man do with the enormous power granted to him by technology? He surrenders himself to unrealistic activities which are invented by himself. Man is a novelist studying himself, inventing his life as a novel

is invented. He fashions a fanciful character with artificial occupations, and then to bring his model into effect he turns his hand to technology. This is his ally in his battle against hostile environment because "man's being and that of nature do not coincide."⁶ The human being is something natural and preternatural at the same time; a species of "ontological centaur."

The Being Which as Yet Is Not

But that reference to the preternatural should not be hastily interpreted as having a spiritualistic meaning. This discussion is dealing with a mere simulation of being, a design for life. That which we call our life is the eagerness to achieve a definite plan or program of existence. Man is not a corporeal or spiritual reality but a program, "thus, that which as yet is not but aspires to be." In Ortegian terminology man "is an entity whose being consists not in that which already is, but in that which as yet is not, a being which consists in as yet not being."⁷ This is an esoteric expression which offers a strange combination of Heideggerian and Fichtean ideas.

Foreseeing possible objections to his theory, Ortega presumes to solve them. "It will be said," he admits, "that a program cannot be had unless someone thinks it, unless there is, therefore, idea, mind, soul, or whatever you wish to call it. I am not able to discuss this deeply because it would launch me into a philosophical treatise. I am only able to make this observation: although the program or plan to be a great financier has to be thought in an idea, 'to be' that plan is not to be that 'idea.' I

easily think that idea, and, yet, I am very far from being that plan."⁸ Above all it should not surprise us that the Spanish philosopher refuses to discuss a problem of such frightening depth. We have become accustomed to those opportune flights throughout his works. The reference to the philosophical treatise is a graceful pretext.

To see how deeply Ortega delves into this problem let us consider a parallel text written about the same time, in which he expresses the previously mentioned question, "Who am I?" He answers that he is neither his body nor his soul. Then he argues against himself: "And if I am neither my soul nor my body, who is the someone who is the same person experiencing that series of happenings which unify my life? As is seen, there is here an enormous problem concealed and in a certain way chloroformed by the habitual facility with which we say 'I.' The sameness of the word tends to make us affirm the sameness of the being represented by the word."⁹ And after stating such a difficult question he takes refuge, as is his custom, in some other point.

The Manufacturing of Self

Ortega has told us that existence for man represents the task of achieving the design of life in a given environment imposed by destiny. Body and soul form part of his environs; they are something distinct from his ego. "Body and soul are things, and I am not a thing but a drama, a battle to achieve that being which I have to be."¹⁰

The world and environment do not represent an exterior and objective reality, but rather intellectual and

pragmatic interpretations, "something which has no being separate and independent from us, but its essence is completely expressed in its being an advantage or obstacle."¹¹ Reality is not explained by intellectual reasoning but as material of action. Fichtean voluntarism could not be more explicit. Life is not something given but something to do, a task. Man has the inescapable duty of fashioning himself. To be, one must act; without action one is not. The urgency of living impels one to create that which as yet is not by twisting a stubborn environment to one's needs. Man is the manufacturer of himself. For him, observes Ortega, "to live is, naturally and above everything else, to try to make that which as yet is not; to know himself in profiting by that which is; in brief, he is production."¹²

Thus, the purpose of technology is to co-operate in fulfilling that program which constitutes man's being. "That vital program precedes activity," and is the fruit of the primordial desire to invent. If the vital plan precedes activity, as Ortega says, and is born of the primordial desire, whence or from whom does that desire issue, since the ego is merely a future program, a being which consists in as yet not being? But even more, whence and how appears the outline of that man which we desire to be? The Spanish philosopher gives no answer.¹³

Historical Man

Historia como sistema adds some new characteristics to Fichte's concept of man as a job to do. In this work Ortega completely adopts the historical approach. The well-

known failure of idealistic philosophy in the previous century, not less than science's own inadequacy, is due in the final analysis, according to Ortega, to the false solution of the problem of man. Science and philosophy should abandon the false hypothesis of considering man as endowed with one nature substantial and constant. For man is not a thing, either psychical or corporeal. Man is drama, he is a job, activity. Faced with the possibilities which life is presenting to him every moment, he is compelled to choose; he makes himself this or that. "Man is an entity which makes himself. . . ." ¹⁴ Even more, he determines what he is to be. He is his own cause.

To Ortega it does not seem a fortuitous coincidence that his new theory of the ego will find, among traditional concepts, use for only those applied to God. Traditional philosophy, according to Ortega, stated that God is the cause of Himself (*causa sui*); that is, that He was caused by Himself. This is a false statement if it refers to Scholastic philosophy, for it would be absurd to speak of a cause which is caused by itself. It would be something else (and quite proper) to say that God has in Himself the ontological reason for His existence.

But coming to the point in question, it is worthwhile to reflect on the incalculable implications of this fact. The divine attributes are applied to the human being. Man has no other end than himself, he is *finis sui*; moreover, he is created by himself, he is *causa sui*, he chooses his being. Notable here is the subtle inclination to supplant God, to appropriate to a poor human creature, limited and contingent, the divine attributes. What would there be to create, asked Nietzsche, if there were gods? This presumption to apply the divine categories to the

ego is, in our opinion, inspired by Fichte, who believed he had found in the center of his own conscience the original moment of the Absolute.

Thus the Sage of the Escorial affirms that man is the author of himself; he invents a model of life, a character to achieve. He admits human liberty. But to him liberty means "to lack constitutive identity," to be nondetermined. If we wish to define man, we must elaborate a non-Eleatic concept of being. "The hour has come," says Ortega, "for Heraclitus' seed to yield its great harvest."¹⁵ The essence of human life is change, substantial variation. Man is no more than widely varied forms of being. Man being essentially fluctuating, there are no limits to what he can become. "In brief," concludes the author, "man has no nature, but he has . . . a history."¹⁶ Man is understandable only in the light of historical reason. In passing, Ortega excuses himself as usual for his brevity, for not attacking certain difficulties. He recognizes the excessive boldness "of indirectly attacking, in the tradition of the Medes, the most frightening subjects of general ontology." And furthermore, he refers us to his next work soon to be published.

In the prologue to his *Obras completas*, which he calls the second sailing, he solemnly reveals the major tenets of his philosophical ideology. We find nothing new. Man has no fixed being before it is invented and selected. Life is a job, a preoccupation with things. Knowledge is an aid to activity, and so forth. We find the same ideas in his essay *Ensimismamiento y alteración*. The note of uncertainty and anxiety is accentuated.

Summary

In his early writings Ortega conceived the subjective, the ego, as something perishable and equivocal, and in the end without value. "The subjective is the error."¹⁷ The fifth volume of the *Espectador* proposes the question of the genuineness of the three egos. The decision favors the soul. However, this does not prevent the character from being declared the authentic ego in his other writings. About 1930 this point was approached from a different angle. "Who am I?" he asked. Inspired by Fichte he answered: I am pure activity, unceasing self-creation. One more step and we have the stage set for historical actualism. The ego is time, history, drama. The influence of Heidegger and Dilthey can be noted.

The serious problems and absurd conclusions which follow from actualism are systematically eluded or disguised. It would be useless to search for a calm consideration of premises, a proof for his evaluations and assertions. That impartial attitude which despises all prejudice and goes directly to the truth deaf to all suggestions of fad or fashion is notable in its absence. On the other hand, the decisive vote is cast for current thought, for the up-to-date theory.

Unstable and dynamic, Ortegian thought marvelously reflects even the most subtle vibrations in the cultural realm.

SECTION THREE: THE MORAL PROBLEM

1

Ethical Vitalism

Ethics as Fiction

ORTEGA IN HIS YOUTH CONCEIVED ETHICS AS CONVENTIONALISM or utilitarian fiction. "What are we," he asks, "except convention? . . . The sincere and spontaneous characteristic of man is without doubt the gorilla."¹ It is the destiny of a rational being to force his impulses into the rut of norms, social conventions, logical laws, moral and esthetical rules, a good education. But it must not be forgotten that while those norms are mere conventions, they represent an incalculable influence over our life. If we try to prescind from them, "the gorilla in us will stand erect and demand his absolute rights; only under the force of fictions and phantasms will we hold him chained."²

Renan's inspiration is manifest. This quotation may be considered a proof: "By means of chimeras," says Renan, "a surprising moral force has been procured from the good gorilla; with the chimeras suppressed, a part of the energy which they inspired will disappear."³ Frankly,

I cannot imagine how the basis for a noble and happy life could be established without the ancient dreams."⁴ For Renan, the master skeptic, as for his young admirer, ethics is "a fiction well implanted throughout history." It is an exquisite superfluity. Man's end is to substitute his individual ego for the ego fashioned by norms and conventions.

Morality and Environment

What a different language we hear years later. Over the naturalistic and skeptical horizon of youth rises life illuminating unsuspected perspectives. Formal and abstract ethics, the last vestige of his idealistic phase, withdraws in favor of capricious and autonomous vital intuition which knows no inflexible norms. In his *Meditaciones del Quijote* Ortega boasts that he is not indifferent to the moral ideal. In its name he breaks lances against those opposing theories which he calls perverse moralities. Among such he includes the utilitarians, although they glory in their inflexibility. He battles for the purification of the ethical ideal. To this end he urges "not to confound the good with the material fulfillment of legal norms" which in his eyes are no more than dogmatic recipes. The true destiny of man is based on "his reabsorption of the environment."⁵ "All ethics," asserts Ortega, "which demands the perpetual inclusion of our free will within a system sealed off from evaluations is *ipso facto* perverse."⁶ The ethics based on metaphysical principles, on inflexible standards, is condemned without a hearing.

He praises, on the other hand, the open morality, fluid and undulating as life, devoid of obligations, free from supramundane sanctions. Not less absurd is generic and abstract duty in the Kantian pattern. Duty in his eyes is personal, inalienable, concrete. "Be what you will be, sell yourself to yourself wholly with full confidence in your own resources. Here is the just imperative."⁷

Hence, he favors the full development of all latent talents in oneself. All tendencies without exception are to be encouraged. We must permit our noble impulses as well as the unwholesome flowers which emerge from the darkness of the subconscious to be exposed to the light indiscriminately.

In a quiet and confidential tone Ortega tells us of the errors of perspective which are committed in ethics. "No morality that is truly such can be observed."⁸ Its norms are merely points of reference on the boundary of our vital horizon; a system of reference for our activity. But in themselves they are unattainable, beyond reach. Thus some in trying to live strictly according to their principles poison their existence with perpetual disturbance and feeling of personal failure. In Ortega's opinion things are in themselves indifferent.⁹ Their goodness or malice is determined by our will. Openly Ortega espouses ethical positivism. The criterion of morality, in his opinion, is in the fullness with which something is desired. "When our whole being," he affirms, "desires something without reserve, without fear, completely, we fulfill our duty, because fidelity to ourselves is the greatest duty."¹⁰

No wonder that in this matter the intelligence must be subjected to the instinct. Ideas on their idealistic pedestal are easily eclipsed when the enslaving hurricane of pas

sion darkens the intellect. From these principles Ortega logically confesses that for him "life has no meaning but is as an ambition not to surrender to nothingness."

The Triumph of Life

As early as the third volume of the *Espectador* the fascination for vital values so dazzled Ortega that he proclaimed life as the supreme norm of morality. "Oh, certainly it is greater wisdom to comply with this mysterious universal will of life! Let us learn to prefer the corruptible to the immutable, the pulsating fickleness of existence to the schematic and livid eternity. . . . The important point is that we fill the present hour to the brim, that we be good wine overflowing the slender cruets."¹¹

He then tells us that he has read the work of Father Nierenberg, *Diferencia entre lo temporal y lo eterno*, without being convinced by the work. In the overestimation of things called eternal Ortega sees the deification of convenient theories and an overthrow of the weak in face of life's magnificent destiny. Nietzsche's stamp is notable in these ideas. The passing, fleeting character of the human being is for Ortega a further motive for accelerating his pleasure. Thus, when Father Nierenberg remarks that pleasure quickly passes, Ortega replies: "a further reason for galloping after it."¹² "As the years and reflections pass over my soul," he says, "they confirm the conviction that the superior, most refined norm is a profound and religious docility to life."¹³ To say yes to the urgings of life is for the Spanish philosopher the highest

morality. But what of the intelligence? Will it remain totally excluded from the moral world? Not according to Ortega. Let us allow it to be faithful to its laws. Let it construct plans. Our attention, however, should be kept alert to seize the most subtle promptings of our vital impulses.

II

Values

THE THEORY OF VALUES IN ORTEGA'S ETHICAL THOUGHT presents a strange and violent picture. Preceded by a vitalistic morality, without any measurable transition, with no logical connection, and leaving hardly any trace in his later thought, a whole essay on the theme of value now suddenly arises, only to disappear later like a volcanic island. And our surprise grows when we note that the theory involves, at least in its original formulation by Scheler, irrevocable opposition to the vitalistic relativism professed by Ortega in his earlier writings.

Actually, the values established by Scheler as a basis of his ethics and adopted by Ortega possess universal validity and objectivity independent of the subjective, although their alogical essence is attainable only by the emotions. Thus the theory of values does not represent a personal viewpoint, a theory organically assimilated by the incoherent and changeable Ortegian thought. It is rather the reactions of his spirit highly sensitive to the

most subtle modulations of the culture under Scheler's influence. Aside from this, the relativistic Ortega vitalism could hardly agree with a theory which postulates objective and universally true values, hierarchically adjusted, regarding the religious element of the human person. The moral value, the essential element of personality, is in fact intrinsically religious.

Recaséns Siches, one of the more detached disciples of Ortega, pointedly notes that although the theory of values represents "one of the most resounding conquests of contemporary thought," it has, nevertheless, been eclipsed by the new existential tendencies of Heidegger and Ortega.¹ In Recaséns' opinion existentialism, far from subjecting the theory of values to a thorough criticism in order to overcome it, has disdainfully swept on, casting it into oblivion. Among the weaknesses in the theory of values noted by Recaséns Siches the radical separation of the reign of value from that of being must be stressed.²

But let us return to Ortega. Values are "a strange, nebulous class of objects which our conscience encounters outside itself as it encounters trees and men."³ The valuable is not the agreeable, as Meinong maintained, nor the desirable, as Ehrenfels believed. Were those theories true, values would be transformed by the mere expression of our psychical states of affability and desire. Clearly, this is false. In Ortega's words, "Whoever is wounded in rescuing his neighbor suffers an injury, and yet he positively values that which his wound produced: the salvation of the other." Another reason why value is not based on agreeableness is shown by the fact that even when a person driven by hunger violates justice, he will recognize the value of justice. Therefore, values are not true be-

cause they please us or because they satisfy our desires, "but on the contrary, they please us and we desire them because they appear to have value."⁴

In Ortega's judgment a complete independence exists between perceiving an object as a determined thing and estimating its values. These values are recognized only by individuals capable of evaluating them. Our faculty for evaluating, that is, for recognizing the worth of an object, would be distinct from the intellect, which perceives the intelligible. The Spanish philosopher at this point adopts Scheler's emotional intuitionism. It will be recalled that Kant, having denied the possibility of metaphysics in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, tried in his *Critique of Practical Reason* to rescue it, at least as a postulate of the will. In this way he cleaved an abyss between the intellect and the will, between metaphysics and morality. Scheler, prompted by the trends of the Baden school, did not wish to prescind from culture but was unable to establish it rationally as objective reality. And since the intellect is excluded from the camp of the *noumenon*, he saved culture, at least as a value, by prescinding from its ontological reality.

Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that thus the person will determine the values, since in themselves they have no being. We are in complete idealism.

Values, continues Ortega, possess determined properties. They are divided first of all into positive and negative categories. Furthermore, they present three dimensions: quality, hierarchy, and material. The laws of evaluation, or the a priori science of values, are as perfectly evident as geometry.

References to the theory of values are found as early as

the second volume of the *Espectador*⁵ and in *The Modern Theme*.⁶

In conclusion we shall say that Ortega's originality in this matter is meager. In a clear but superficial explanation he condensed the conclusions Scheler had made after a laborious inquiry into the mysterious region of values. Scheler himself testified: "In Spain, Ortega y Gasset, Professor of Metaphysics at the University of Madrid, has adequately adhered to the sociological theories and the theories of values in my work."⁷ And he makes further references to Ortega's essay on values.

III

Ethical Vitalism (Continued)

Morality and Expediency

AT NOON ON A BRILLIANT FEBRUARY DAY WE FIND ORTEGA far from his habitual occupations, on a golf course, outlined against the blue mist of the mountains. Refined and polite, the conversation turns from inane, superficial subjects to the inevitable philosophical theory. Let us listen.

It is erroneous to consider morality "as a system of prohibitions and generic duties the same for all individuals."¹ That is abstraction. Life is too rich to be left confined to one moral code. Each human profession possesses its own peculiar ethics. For the intellectual man, that politician is immoral who uses ambiguous terms. The woman of the world is an object of scandal and horror to the middle-class woman. Morality, therefore, is a matter of expediency, of propriety. Each man possesses an untransferable, personal destiny, a repertory of actions and dutiful habits. Ortega urges a "return to the fashionable tepidity with which the ancients, in place of moral-

ity (awful word), were accustomed to call that decent which was fitting, that which went well, the correct."²

Nothing is more foreign to Ortegian ethics than the idea of obligation. Morality is sport, "something superabundantly added to that which is necessary and essential."³ Consequently, it should possess its bit of irony, avoiding all hysterics. Moral perfection is entirely free, something to which no one can force us. "Hence the man who is perfect in something feels the pleasure of being unfaithful sometimes to his own norms and of falling, so to speak, into sin. Anything else would be to idolize the regulation as if it were of itself an absolute value and necessary."⁴

After this it is easily understood that Ortega is not embarrassed to confess that he does not believe much in obligation. Duty and obligation in his eyes play a subsidiary role: "they are needed to fill the emptiness left by illusion and enthusiasm." And he concludes with a phrase which ominously illuminates his thought: "an illusion is always more fruitful than a duty."⁵

Double Morality

But Ortega's ethical vitalism does more than prefer illusion to duty. His essay on *Mirabeau, o el politico*⁶ reveals his secret Nietzschean inclination to establish a double morality, the one valid for the impulsive and dynamic man of action, the other for the common individual. He begs us not to accuse the successful politician of immorality. All he lacks is scrupulosity. Honesty, veracity, and sexual temperance, although virtues, are of a minor cate-

gory; "they are the virtues of pusillanimity." Before censuring a great man for lacking petty virtues, Ortega invites us to consider carefully the subterranean foundations, the obscure roots which support his tremendous stature. The public man needs those diabolical powers; without a certain dose of the gigantic, creation is impossible. The great politician's lack of morality is the overflowing devilish power which enables him "to surpass humanity, to advance further and to approach the stars."⁷ Ortega discovers the titan's characteristics in the man of action, ambitious, impulsive, without scruples. That Ortegian titan is a grotesque caricature of Nietzsche's superman.

The division of men according to value into pusillanimous and magnanimous is a plagiarism of Nietzsche's doctrine which established one morality for the masters and another for the slaves. It is conjectured that he secretly planned to justify the most brutal vices under the pretext that the political genius had to override the elemental and demoniacal forces in order to attain his difficult objective.

Politics was thus detached from ethics. But if violence, hypocrisy, and licentiousness are justifiable in the titan, in the public man, will not the same be true for the masses?

IV

Immorality and Barbarism

The Masses

NOTHING IS MORE OPPOSED TO THE ORTEGAN CONCEPT OF morality than an obligatory system of inflexible norms. A freely accepted rule of conduct, a lavish, sporting spirit concerned with the courtesies of life—that is ethics for Ortega.

Yet about 1930 his writings reveal the pathetic symptoms of deep change. Watching the cultural horizon, he has noticed a terrible crisis pressing down on Europe: the revolt of the masses. The masses stand for all that has no value, that demands nothing of itself. The common man consciously bestows on himself the right to vulgarity. If that type of human being gains control of Europe, thirty years will be enough, according to Ortega, to revert into barbarism. The common man, a child spoiled by civilization, gives free rein to his primitive desires; he rejects all law and violates every norm. Anarchical and violent, he abolishes legal proceedings, and to impose his whim he takes direct action. It is not strange that Ortega sees

in the man of the masses "a primitive being who has slipped into the canvas of the ancient civilized scene."¹ Barbarism is the absence of norms.

Ortega discovers the roots of the man of the masses not only in the common and uncultured man but also in the scientist. The specialist in burying himself in his own branch loses contact with the rest of science, with the "integral interpretation of the universe which is the only thing deserving the names of science, culture, European civilization."² This does not prevent him from adopting an air of sufficiency about every other point nor from endeavoring to impose his viewpoint even in matters about which he is obviously ignorant. "This disposition of refusing to listen," Ortega affirms, "of refusing to yield to superior arguments, which I have repeatedly presented as a characteristic of the man of the masses, reaches its culmination in precisely these partially qualified men. They symbolize, and in great part constitute, the actual rule of the masses, and their barbarism is the most immediate cause of Europe's demoralization."³ The primitive barbarism now threatening us is the natural fruit of the last century's civilization which gave free rein to its impulses.

In all, the greatest danger which hangs over Europe is the abuse of the state, "the intervention of the State." By this means the masses rise up and impose their brutal appetites on the minority.

The tragic crisis now lashing the world reveals a serious demoralization in nations and individuals, if we are to believe Ortega. He urges that the uncontrolled barbarism be governed by laws and norms; "without precepts which oblige us to live in a certain way," Ortega admits, "our

life is left open to all influences. This is the terrible personal condition in which the best youths of the world find themselves. Completely unrestrained, free from all bonds, they feel vacuous. Such a life without principles is a greater privation of self than death."⁴

Ortega believes that the best way to lift Europe from its prostration is to convert Europe into one great national state, a Pan-Europe.

The Real Need

The real need, however, is not hidden from Ortega: "Europe has been left without morality."⁵ All shout for their rights, but no one remembers his obligations. This repudiation of duty explains the stupidity of people who declare themselves youthful "because they have heard it said that youth has more rights than obligations." Man today lacks morality, which is essentially a feeling of submission to something, a sense of service and obligation. Nevertheless, as Ortega asserts, it is not possible easily to ignore ethics. There is no amorality. Anyone who renounces all norms is not amoral but immoral. "How has it been possible to believe in the amorality of life?" asks Ortega. Perhaps, he replies, the fault lies with today's culture. "Europe is now harvesting," he continues, "the painful consequences of its spiritual conduct. It has impetuously spent itself on a culture that is at once magnificent and without roots."⁶

The keen insight of Ortega's diagnosis must be recognized. The European crisis, whose tragic consequences are now being suffered by grieving humanity, is essentially

of a moral nature. One might hope that Ortega, having put his finger on the bloody ulcer, would plunge the scalpel into the pus-laden abscess. In spite of his superb exposition, of his penetrating analysis in which he shows us the anatomy of the present crisis, Ortega remains on the periphery. He has pointed out the true evil, but he refuses to explore its ultimate causes, to venture into its secret recesses, to respect loyally the marvelous lesson taught by the facts. However, it does not escape his eminent talent that in this whole question the big problem is to determine "From what fundamental insufficiencies does the modern European culture suffer?" But to that great question he answers, "It has to remain outside these pages because it is too broad."⁸ And he offers us the flimsy excuse of the pressure of time and the limitation of space. This turn is certainly nothing new in Ortega's superficial treatment.

To summarize: Faced with the terrible European crisis, Ortega, who had seen in ethics a sporting quality, a superfluity of life, free from sanctions and duties, reverses his steps. Under the impact of the crisis, the marvelous Western culture could follow along the way of the extinct Babylonian and Egyptian civilizations. Even in the scientist, Europe's crown, he believes he has discovered the germ of barbarism.

Barbarism is the absence of norms, repudiation of laws. Europe is gravely ill from immorality. The inexorable, objective, historical lesson is unequivocal. Without commandments, without laws, without duties and sanctions Western civilization is irreparably lost. Ortega's confession is eloquent and tragic—but insincere and incomplete. He sees the true evil but is content to hint at it.

Rather than launch a noble adventure with no other guide but the truth, he does not hesitate to leave his most penetrating and dramatic work, *The Revolt of the Masses*, mutilated and incomplete. We suspect a secret fear of exposing himself, of correcting the vitalistic immorality evident in his previous writings.

V

The Vital Imperative

ORTEGA QUICKLY FORGOT THE SOBERING LESSON OF THE masses in revolt. Two years had scarcely passed before he was again proposing his self-determining and vitalistic ethics. The new terminology and inflection reveal Heidegger's influence.

The moral norm cannot be something juxtaposed to life. Life is ethical in itself. The moral imperative is immanent in man. Duty consists in giving close attention to the interior voice of one's own destiny; thus it opposes traditional norms. "The man whose destiny is to be a thief," says Ortega, "has to be a thief even though his moral principles are opposed to it. . . . The thing is terrible but undeniable; the man who had to be a thief and has managed by virtuous efforts of his will not to be such falsifies his life."¹ Duty in the rational order is something secondary to the vital imperative rooted in the deepest and most fundamental part of our being. Rational and abstract ethics should yield priority to the personal, concrete, vital imperative.² Here we perceive a distant echo

from the central thesis of Ortega's *Modern Theme*: "Pure Reason must yield its dominion to the Vital Reason."⁸

In the same way all rigid systems of prohibitions and commands are inadmissible; "the norm arises with the action," in the clash with environment. "True duty" in Ortega's opinion, "is not the calcified, stratified formula which is found imposed once and for all, but rather a sublime inspiration which the fleeing moment suggests."⁴

Life is reality insofar as it is genuine; insofar as it realizes its irreplaceable and vital imperative.⁵ These are concepts in the unmistakable Heideggerian strain.

In harmony with this moral viewpoint the theme of life as a job, as an inexorable mission, as destiny, insistently re-echoes in Ortega's more recent writings. Here we have shining forth an unconfessed eagerness to vindicate life without God, with neither rules nor sanctions.

In human life "every other reality is included; it is the fundamental reality"; outside of it nothing exists.⁶ This is vitalism without God, justified in itself. Life is now valuable and ethical for its own sake, according to Ortega. It is idle, therefore, to inquire who has burdened us with the relentless anxiety of existence. "My life," says Ortega, "consists in that I find myself forced to exist in a definite environment. . . . To live is to have fallen prisoner of inescapable surroundings."⁷

But life forces us to choose one mode of being from among innumerable possibilities, to realize the design or destiny which constitutes my ego. If a man succeeds in finding his real ego by giving ear to the vital imperative, that man is genuine. On the contrary, if he cheats himself of his true self, he falsifies his own reality, he an-

negates an instant of his time for living.⁸ It is important, then, that every action spring forth from our own personal being, that it be in accord with our personal destiny. The action most our own will be that which grants most reality and meaning to our existence, because life is a mission, destiny, inescapable vocation.⁹ Mission is the consciousness of that genuine being which every man is called to achieve.¹⁰ But in man's paradoxical condition he can accept or elude his genuine destiny. Hence the essential perplexity. "One can never be sure in the concrete about what must be done."¹¹ One is never sure of personal success. "Every one of us," continues Ortega, "is always in danger of not being that true self, unique and irreplaceable, which he is."¹² Man is substantial uncertainty.

The supreme imperative is that formulated by Pindar twenty centuries ago and adopted by Fichte: "Become that which you are."¹³ Fulfill integrally your plan of life, fully unfold your potentialities.

The dominion of the vital and the instinctive over the rational is evident and disconcerting. Even in the ethical world reason has been supplanted by life.¹⁴ The influence of amoral and alogical existentialism on this latest stage of Ortega's thought is self-evident. Theories like that of the genuine and false ego, life as fundamentally insecure, the condemnation of all abstract norms, life as a realization of a plan or destiny, and moral agnosticism are ideas equally familiar to Fichte and Heidegger.

VI

Ethical Formation

LET US CONSIDER THE PANORAMA OF ORTEGA ETHICS, even though only cursorily. Three principal phases are distinguishable in his dynamic formation. In his *Meditaciones del Quijote* the rationalistic positivism of his youth transformed itself into the relativistic vitalism which about 1930 adopted the trappings and language of Heideggerian existentialism. In Ortega's dynamic formation *Revolt of the Masses* reflects his phase of straight reasoning in search of cause and effect. It is for the moment the ascending force which seems to conquer the emotional, uncontrolled impulse.

Just as in the theoretical field, so in the practical, Ortega's thought reflects the surrounding panorama. The positivistic atmosphere of the second half of the last century was succeeded by Bergson's spiritualistic reaction. Life, the supreme reality in the ontological order, became the main subject of philosophical reflection. Vitalism planted its realities in the world of thought. On the other hand, we hardly find a vestige of phenomenology in Or-

Ortega's works. The reason is obvious. Husserl was concerned with essences, concepts, and abstractions of undeniably rationalistic stock. Now for Ortega all rationalism is utopian, unhistorical, and therefore inadmissible. He shows deep sympathy, on the contrary, for the existential movement which in no way impedes him from remaining openly independent of it.

From these facts we are more and more convinced that Ortega's supreme criterion of truth is not the light of evidence that emanates from things and actions, but fidelity to the vital environment, harmony with the ideology of the age. Let us be of our day, he explains. Let us learn to limit ourselves sharply by accepting our time as our destiny without nostalgia or utopian dreams.¹

Ortega condemns as perverse those ethical norms which impose inescapable obligations which have equal validity for all. Life possesses an immanent morality. It is the greatest wisdom to co-operate with life, rejecting none of its exquisite suggestions. To prefer the corruptible to the immutable, the fleeting to the eternal, to desire something thoroughly—here you have his moral criterion. Human life, the concrete life of each individual, is the fundamental reality.

His study of values marks a brief parenthesis. His theory of values, while openly opposed to his earlier doctrines, scarcely left a mark on his later ideology. The pronounced relativistic tone reappears in his conception of morality as a mere convenience and showy sport. Duty is subordinated to illusion.

His essay entitled *Mirabeau, o el político* adopts Nietzsche's open immorality and establishes a double morality. The statesman's titanic qualities compensate and

justify his passions and licentiousness. The titan or super-man lives beyond good and evil.

But Ortega suddenly discovers unsuspected realities. A new wave of barbarism rolls over Europe. Yet this time its frontiers do not rumble under the gallop of Asiatic hordes. In the tremendous temples of technology the new god has been elevated; in the laboratories consecrated to science, in the sumptuous palaces of finance, even in the universities, the modern barbarian, the man of the masses, lawless and immoral, lives and multiplies. Before this moral cataclysm the terror-stricken Ortega watches the cracking cement of European civilization. He recognizes the absolute necessity of an obligatory norm, of law and of duty, if Europe is to save itself. The facts force upon him the evidence that without a higher law life becomes frivolous, empty, and inconsistent. This significant though incomplete confession is on his lips. After hinting at the evil, yet fearful lest a complete revelation might oblige him to adopt an irrevocable position, he avoids further investigation, leaving untouched the great problem proposed by the masses in revolt. Ethical vitalism now springs up again with renewed vigor in Ortega's writings, thanks to existentialism's favorable atmosphere. His laudable observations on uncontrolled barbarism seem to be forgotten.

His new moral viewpoint, colored by Heidegger's influence, offers a violent mixture of Fichtean, relativistic, and skeptical ideas. While in the theoretical order man believes in fantastic worlds of ideas and beliefs which he accepts as reality, in the practical field he creates his own being. Man is an absolute entity although finite and predestined to nothingness. He is a strange deity essentially

temporal and historical. His destiny is to hold fast to himself; to reflect his genuine being. The notions of objective law, duty, sanction, sin are not recognized in Ortega's ideology. The whole of his work is dedicated to assigning validity and meaning to this life, to discovering some motive that will make it tolerable.

Having lost faith in the supernatural, in reason, and in culture, he has nothing left but his disillusioned living. Ortega the skeptic knows that science, morality, culture, the human spirit's whole activity are conventional and illusory.

But vitality stripped of values is not able to satisfy man. Hence Ortega feverishly but hardly logically confers on human life a string of titles for lack of anything better. Read his latest essays, and you will be interrupted at each step by the persistent theme: life is an incapable mission, inexorable job, task, destiny, drama. Does not this point to a secret desire to vindicate at any price the proposed life without God, without personal immortality, without duties or sanctions? Does not this reveal his intention to legalize atheism?

SECTION FOUR: THE CONCEPT OF GOD

I

Formation of His Theological Thought

His Pantheistic Inspiration

IT WOULD BE USELESS TO SEARCH FOR CLARITY AND PRECISION in Ortega's notion of God. We must content ourselves with gleaning the scanty allusions which Ortega has disseminated without order or system throughout his multifarious writings.

His youthful thought espoused an openly pantheistic concept. God is the absolute objectivity, deprived of a personal subjectivity, lacking self-awareness.¹ In *Las Meditaciones del Quijote* God becomes a viewpoint. "When will we convince ourselves," he asks, "that the essential being of the world is neither material nor a soul, nor any determined thing, but a perspective? God is hierarchical perspective."²

Years later the same ideas are repeated in *The Modern Theme*. God is conceived as a point of view, "as the symbol of the living stream." God is a being without personality who "sees things through men." Men are the visual organs of the divinity.³ The pantheistic ideology persists unchanged.

About 1926 this indefatigable student of cultures, studying the horizon, sighted "to the starboard the land-fall of the divinity," and shouted from his watchtower: "God is in view." But his first care is to disabuse the naïve who would wish to see in this a change of his own convictions. "We are not dealing," he states, "in any pious notions; we are not even dealing with religion."⁴ God also has secular, profane aspects, and Ortega is concerned only with these. At some length he sketches the idea that there are epochs of *odium Dei*, of flight from the divinity, and epochs in which that tremendous reality reappears on the cultural horizon. The human mind is narrow, rigid. It must be blinded to some things if it is to see others. Thus we have that "periodic appearance and disappearance of the divinity."⁵ Each epoch gives particular attention to definite subjects. "Man's attention," Ortega continues, "roams like a warship's searchlight over the immense sweep of reality, ladling out from it now one fragment, now another. That roaming of the attention constitutes human history."⁶

Unlike our time, the past century made a show of agnosticism, says Ortega. The agnostic refuses to know certain things; he is the soul of caution and prudence. But the things which he attempts to ignore "are not just anything at random, but precisely the ultimate and primary things; that is to say, the decisive facts of life."⁷ Such a state of mind is foreign to our era. It is true that the agnostic acknowledges that something not reducible to experience, something definitive and essential, is concealed beyond the immediate and positive. The agnostic landscape, continues Ortega, does not have final boundaries. Everything in view is in the foreground, violating

the elementary law of perspective. It is a myopic landscape, a mutilated panorama. The primary and the decisive are eliminated. Attention is fixed exclusively on the secondary and the fluctuating.⁸ The agnostic is confined to this world. He foregoes discovery of the ultimate reason of things.

And as if the above condemnation of agnosticism were not energetic enough, Ortega in a penetrating observation sketches for us the profile of the world without God, "Because this world is that which remains of the universe when we have eradicated everything fundamental, it is, therefore, a world without foundation, without stability, without firm principles, a desert island floating aimlessly over a mysterious element."⁹ In spite of such pretty words and such worthy observations Ortega has no positive explanation for this lofty subject. Here we have the whole of Ortega's work as unimpeachable testimony.

Anyone not accustomed to Ortega, the dilettante, would be not a little surprised if he accepted the above ideas as sincerely expressed. In the fourth volume of the *Espectador*, after designating God as an "ultramundane and metaphysical reality," he defines the term some pages later with phrases of the coarsest naturalism. "Looking into ourselves," asserts Ortega, "we find that which seems best to us among all that seething mass, and we make this our God. The divine is the idealization of the better parts of man, and religion consists in the cult which half of each individual renders to its other half, its inferior and sluggish characteristics to the more highly strung and heroic."¹⁰ The materialist Feuerbach, Marx' inspiration, could without doubt subscribe to a similar statement.

A New Revelation

Estudios sobre el amor is written in a delicate style, one of the best products of Ortegan artistry. Shrewd psychology, sagacious intuitions, marvelous language. In its pages an inscrutable subject is begun *pianissimo*. The European soul, it says, dwells close to a new experience of God, to new inquiries into that most important of all realities.¹¹ Nevertheless, the divine message will not come in a mystical way but by the theological routes of discursive thought. Identical concepts reappear two years later.¹²

In restless counterpoint with these ideas, the naturalistic motive is again heard. In the prologue to his *Obras completas* it is stated that the idea of eternity, of God, springs up in man as a saving compensation "for his inescapable environment. . . . It is painful for man to be of one time and of one place, and his dissatisfaction at this assignment to the spacial-temporal clod resounds in his thought under the guise of eternity. Man would wish to be eternal precisely because he is the contrary."¹³ But again the subject of revelation is aired with renewed intensity—but with a different meaning. Ortega asserts that a new revelation is needed, and by this he means the contact with a reality; "it does not matter which this might be, provided that it certainly appears to us as reality and no mere idea of our own. . . ." ¹⁴ And in later pages with repeated insistence the haunting idea assails us: man needs a new revelation.

Although it might seem unlikely, Ortega recognizes the necessity of something absolute, of something immovable on which to anchor in the flow of fleeting history. This is necessary because man, he admits, "loses himself with-

in his own arbitrary and unrestrained internal intrigue, when he is unable to resist and to discipline it in the clash with something which really is genuine and rigorous reality. . . . When man is left alone or believes that he is alone without other reality distinct from his ideas, which cruelly restricts him, he loses the recognition of his own reality and becomes an imaginary, ghostly, fantastic reality to himself. Only under the formidable pressure of some transcendancy is our personality made compact and solid, and a discrimination is produced in us between that which we really are and that which we merely imagine ourselves to be."¹⁵

But whence, he asks, can that new revelation come to us which man needs? With faith in God and in discursive reason lost, there only remains for us "the disillusioned living." This is the new revelation which Ortega offers to the tragic humanity of our time!¹⁶ Disillusioned life is, therefore, the inevitable and fundamental reality, the new revelation. In his last existentialistic writings God disappears from the Ortegian horizon.

In the light of the ominous doctrine expressed in *Ideas y creencias*, not even the disillusioned life remains intact as fundamental reality. Every idea, every conviction, every belief is declared imaginary and fictitious, the fantasy's reaction before the mystery of existence.

It is certain that Ortega, always alert not to compromise himself, feared being cut off from retreat, and in a footnote he opened a breach which allowed him opportune flight. "Let us leave untouched," he says, "the question of whether beneath the deepest stratum (our beliefs) there is anything else, a metaphysical foundation which not even our beliefs attain."¹⁷

This shamefaced note is of little value after the previous affirmations. Nevertheless, let us not forget that for the cultured spectator the essential thing is to follow the perpetual historical oscillations like a shadow. As in 1926 he shouted, "God is in view," now that existentialism has invaded the philosophical firmament, having forgotten about God he proclaims from his watchtower the new theme: human life.

Part Two: Critique

I

Character Sketch

The Cultured Skeptic

FOR AN ADEQUATE INTERPRETATION OF ORTEGA'S WORKS nothing is so helpful as studying them from the cultural viewpoint. Before everything else José Ortega y Gasset is the philosopher of culture (*Kulturphilosoph*)—but of a culture recognized as ephemeral and relative, no more than a natural process of living bound down to existence, spurning hierarchical standards, rejecting the bigoted savants of the last century, boasting of atheism. Its task is to give full meaning to the modest and insignificant fact, as well as to the transcendental theme. "To arrange the materials of every order, which, like useless flotsam from a shipwreck, life in its constant undertow casts at our feet in such a way that they give off innumerable reflections from the sun."¹

There is in everything, even in the lowliest, a secret ambition for fullness. A philosophical explanation puts the subject "in immediate relation with the elemental currents of the spirit, with the classical motives for man's

vital interests. Once it is interwoven with them, it remains transfigured, transubstantiated, saved."²

With his soul open for love, the Sage of the Escorial approaches reality. His philosophy aspires to be the general science of love, a certain amorous way of looking at things. Wearied of distant perspectives, he concentrates his attention on the immediate environment, on day-to-day living. For him that environment is chiefly Spain, but in no sense idealized. His ambition is to find a rational explanation for the Spaniard. A race is a style of living, its own peculiar sense of appreciation. Ortega throws himself into the search for those "half-dozen places where the specific heart of our race throbs with purity and intensity."³

Before the huge, austere pile of the Escorial he meditates over the immortal pages of *Quixote*, on the dramatic figure of Don Juan. In *Invertebrate Spain* he sketches a gloomy picture of things Spanish. On a blazing August day, riding a dapple-gray mule with long ears he begins a sentimental journey to the land of Castille along the trail of the Cid. He avidly reads the pages of Azorín and Baroja and is eloquent about the medieval castles. He charmingly chats of Goya and Velázquez. But by that time he has passed beyond the boundary of Spain. The ever-restless hunter of themes like an insatiable spectator takes the world for the scope of his investigations. To his avid curiosity modern culture has no secrets.

He tells us of esthetics and literature, of love and war, of painting and pedagogy, of Hegel, Kant, and Scheler. On a golf course, on a warm midday in February, into the polite and sophisticated chatter he weaves subtle moral theories. All his preoccupations with the extensive

culture of the era find echo in his writings. The new esthetic appreciation interests him keenly, and on this subject he has written penetrating essays. Debussy and Proust, Cézanne and Mallarmé march through his pages.

The philosophy of the day—the triumph of life's values—becomes an inevitable theme for his reflections, a key to his philosophical works. *The Modern Theme* is eloquent testimony. *The Revolt of the Masses*, as well as his other works, reveals a new aspect of the many-sided Ortega personality: the politico-social facet. He marvelously grasps extensive historical syntheses and cultural panorama. He follows scientific progress with tenacious perseverance.

It is no more than just to recognize in Ortega y Gasset one of the most important cultural philosophers of our time. His place is beside Simmel, Spengler, and Klages. His brilliant and stimulating essays seem to be brought forth by the entreaty of fluctuating environment.⁴

The crown of Ortega's encyclopedic culture is his eminent literary talent. One of the secrets which gives his style its artful charm consists, as Fernando Vela states, "in concentrating into one subject all the possible allusions, references, reflections, and echoes."⁵

But Ortega is also a psychologist by temperament. The mysterious psychological world constitutes his natural medium. He glories in the exploration of the soul's hidden elements, dismantling the complicated mechanism of emotional phenomena with the mastery of an expert in psychic details.

In his works *Estudios sobre el amor*, and "Vitalidad, alma y espíritu" he focuses his magnifying glass on the heart of man. With the skill of a pearl-diver he comes to

the surface carrying the rich booty of psychical fauna. For Ortega cultures and historical periods are living creatures endowed with a profound and complex soul which, like the human soul, jealously guards its secrets. Essays like "La Expresión fenómeno cósmico," "Meditación de Don Juan," "La Percepción del prójimo," and "Para una psicología del hombre interesante," are filigrees of style, of penetrating observation and valuable psychology. The Madrid author has a certain touch for the immaterial, an eye alert to capture the most delicate shades of feeling, the exact psychical feature. Ortega is a psychologist in the experimental field.

His Style

Ortega's personality is enigmatic and widely criticized. Yet he manages to attract us by the transparent elegance of his style, at once stimulating and subtle in its shadings, sharp in its irony, rich in allusions and evasions. He is circumspect and aristocratic, given neither to sudden rage nor sublime enthusiasms. Encased in bright images, his ideas dazzle rather than convince us. Gently they slip into the soul as a sweet and brilliant theory which calms the feelings and delights the intellect. Only after freeing ourselves from this strange influence are we aware of having been victims of a fraud. Ortega's prose, impeccable in its classical serenity, always raises in the soul a turmoil of anxiety. Like the tranquil sea it hides its depths.

His style has betrayed Ortega. It might be said that behind the unapproachable gentleman, on whose lips skepticism has painted a thin sneer of irony, lies the scof-

ing features of the Nietzschean Zarathustra carrying an incendiary message to the world. An irrepressible suspicion arises that the whole work of the Sage of the Escorial is no more than the tragic projection of that eternal battle which Dionysus and Apollo carry on in his own spirit—reason *versus* life.

If he praises order, mental clarity, hierarchy of values and norms, he also exalts sport and the luxury of living to the highest philosophical level. In his opinion art and morality are superfluous sports, though of a value equal to that of philosophy. Society and the state had their origin in a group of young warriors who were as likely to go hunting as to steal young maidens from distant nations. Such is the "Origen deportivo del estado."

Ortega's olympic serenity is a myth. Between the lines we can glimpse the drama of an agitated spirit, victim of a secret anxiety which in spite of his lofty intelligence and enormous culture has not yet achieved the essential equilibrium which harmonizes thinking with living.

Nor is it easy to discover what Ortega really holds. He submits his ideas to a scrupulous analysis before putting them on paper. Whoever tries to penetrate his thought has to launch forth on an arduous ideological hunt through the dense jungle of his extensive works. His philosophical thought hates the light which reveals strange aspects of things, and it prefers that soft twilight which dissolves and confuses the environment of beings into a vague nebulosity. Behind the scenery of his metaphors he artfully juggles his ideas. He calls this his delight, his irony—to wear that masquerade which permits us only by close scrutiny to glimpse his real characteristics. "*Larvatus prodeo*," he confesses.⁶

His Message

His is an incendiary message. Life is the supreme value. "The hour has sounded," he proclaims, "in which life's values are finally going to be revealed."⁷ The grand theme of our time consists in "subjecting reason to living, in restricting it within biological limits, in subordinating it to the spontaneous."⁸ "Pure reason has to yield its supremacy to vital reason." Life needs no rigid enclosure, whether it be justice, asceticism, or culture, to be of worth; "life is valuable in itself."⁹ Human existence is thus exalted to the plane of an absolute reality.

In Ortega's own words, we are taking part in the most fundamental crisis in history. Ortega believes himself called to point out the new ways to salvation. "Instead of saying that life is for culture, we say that culture is for life."¹⁰ "Men have lived," he continues, "for religion, for science, for morality, for economics; they have even lived to serve the will o' the wisp of art or of pleasure; the only thing they have not tried is to live deliberately for the sake of living."¹¹ Following on the ancient period and the Cartesian or idealistic ages, his thought inaugurates, at least in his own opinion, the third philosophical era: the day of vitalism which enthrones life as the supreme value and gives true meaning to the concept of being.¹² In this way, he asserts, we have attained a new, higher level, in that antiquity and modernity are at once integrated and excelled.¹³ If Descartes revised Aristotle, Ortega affirms that he has revised Descartes by surpassing him.

Attentive to the philosophy of the time, he discovers in the currently emerging thought the symptom of a new

vital appreciation. "They are light ripples brought to the quiet surface of the pool by the first breeze." In the new artistic forms the same inspiration and style are manifested. Its striking characteristics are the tendency to dehumanize art by avoiding living forms and by considering art as a frivolous and useless game. Confined to esoteric groups, the new art represents a reaction against the romantic, emotional, and exhibitionist inspiration which fondles the sentiments of the masses. The new art is unpopular. Personal feelings have been expressed through music from Beethoven to Wagner. "Every artist," says Ortega, "tells us with notable immodesty his own feelings as an individual."¹⁴

For the mediocre bourgeoisie music expresses only trivial feelings; "in the *Sixth Symphony* the peaceful merchant, the righteous professor, the unsophisticated worker, the young business woman see their own emotions expressed, and in recognizing them they are stirred to grateful delight."¹⁵ This type of music is only a pretext for listening to oneself. "When we hear Beethoven's 'Romance in F' or other typically romantic music, we usually enjoy it by concentrating on ourselves. With our backs turned, so to speak, on the action of the violin, we notice the flow of emotions which it stirs up in us. Music does not interest us for itself, but rather for its mechanical repercussions in us, the sentimental rainbow-hued cloud which the passing sound raises within us as it brushes by."¹⁶

Romantic art encroaches upon us; it startles us with its sentiments. It impedes serene enjoyment, artistic contemplation. Debussy labored to purify true art from all personal feelings. Thanks to him we are able to hear

music serenely, "without rapture and without weeping."¹⁷ In Ortega's judgment, Mallarmé had the same intention in the field of poetry; he "restored to the poem its uplifting and ascendant force."¹⁸ The Italian dramatist, Luigi Pirandello, carried the task of renovation to completion in the theater.¹⁹

In the sphere of painting, the new schools (expressionism, cubism, surrealism) make the human form a despicable thing; they subject the real to disconcerting modes. "From painting things they have come to paint ideas; the artist has become blind to the external world and has turned his eye to the internal and subjective vistas."²⁰ Reduced to a meaningless game, art has lost its hierarchical solemnity, its bold designs of saving humanity which Schopenhauer and Wagner at one time cherished.

Despite his secret sympathy for the new trend in esthetic appreciation, Ortega is too clever to miss the truth. He comes very close to thinking that the new art in spite of its scandals and boldness "up to now has produced nothing which deserves the trouble."²¹ In his judgment, even its esthetic value is disputable.²²

But his critical observations do not cease there. In the heart of the complex phenomenon he believes he has discovered, not a legitimate eagerness to seek new ways, but a hatred for art, for science, for the state, and for the whole culture. "Is it," he asks, "that an unbelievable animosity ferments in European breasts against its own historical essence?"²³ Before a subject of such suggestive depth one would hope for a serious analysis producing valuable conclusions. Vain desire! "Now is the time," he says, "to stop writing definitively and to leave the ques-

tion open. . . ."²⁴ Behind the thin veil of his metaphor we glimpse his slightly ironical smile.

But this transmutation of values does not confine its impetuous current to the world of the beautiful. Culture, exalted to divine honors by the last two centuries, should be cast from its altars and be put to the service of life. Culturalism—Christianity without God, in Ortega's phrase—made morality, science, and art the end and justification of human life. Ortega contemptuously calls it the bigotry of culture. "Everything in the lofty German thought from Kant to 1900," he states, "can be summarized under this caption: Philosophy of Culture. Even with only a superficial acquaintance we would see its close resemblance to medieval theology. There has merely been a transferring of values, and where the old Christian philosopher would say 'God,' the contemporary German says, 'Idea' (Hegel), 'Primacy of the Practical Reason' (Kant, Fichte), or 'Culture' (Cohen, Windelband, Rickert)."²⁵

Such a misrepresentation of man's intellectual, moral, and artistic activity could only bring on dismal errors. Culture, according to Ortega, is no more than convention, the subtle veil that covers the gorilla lying dormant in every man;²⁶ something that one fine day was born of the "spiritual entrails of an individual confused by his whims and dispositions."²⁷ Illusion, mirage, charming, delightful fiction—and nothing else. With a certain nostalgia Ortega concludes that "justice and truth, the whole work of the spirit, are mirages produced in matter."²⁸

Why should we vainly fool ourselves by sacrificing our life at such altars? The reprisals against this state of af-

fairs are ruthless; in anger man seeks his rights so long abused. Quoting Nietzsche Ortega decides that "all that we today call culture, education, civilization will someday have to appear before an infallible judge, Dionysus [the god of delight in living]." ²⁹

For Ortega the true meaning of culture is a system of fundamental convictions which each era brands on its own existence, the tragic interpretation of its restless environment. Perhaps it is the disillusioned conviction that the enigma of the world is insoluble. Culture is a relative and historical product—as is man.

His Intellectual Sphere

A being of transition, Ortegán thought springs into the light between the Neo-Kantian decline and the birth of vitalism. At first he rebelled against the culturalistic idealism of his youth. Bergson afforded him his view of life as a cosmic torrent, the origin of all beings. Nevertheless, the firmness of his mental habits preserved the pattern of his long standing rational viewpoint. Fichte and Kant, Renan and Taine battle in his soul against the enslaving influence of Faust and Zarathustra. The ruthless conflict between reason and life breaks out. Without the light of the intellect existence is chaotic, brutish, purely natural. But old Zarathustra, fickle and blasphemous, has revealed to Ortega the supreme value of existence, irreducible to concepts, superior to all norms, marvelous and ephemeral in its eternal revolving. Life is its own justification.

Not less than Nietzsche, Goethe, the old mandarin, has left on Ortega a hidden stamp. Ortega so well learned

the secret lesson of the Weimar fugitive, "of the perpetual deserter from himself," that he would always feel terror and hate whenever faced with an "irrevocable decision."

Ortega boldly studied and stated the gravest problems. But how much indecision and insincerity in his solutions! Faced with these problems he adopts the role of a superficial and frivolous litterateur who reduces everything to skilful jugglery and sleight of hand, to fireworks and metaphorical flowers.

In his latest writings the stamp of alogical and vitalistic existentialism is undeniable.⁸⁰ The spirits of Heidegger and Dilthey betray themselves. Yet, the culturalistic philosopher has still not said his last word. Years ago he promised two definitive works. It is true that he has afforded us previews in *Ideas y creencias* and *Ensimismamiento y alteración*. Yet we have to confess our complete disillusion. These essays reveal an Ortega whom we have already vaguely glimpsed. The idealistic and alogical germs contained in his earlier writings now attain menacing maturity. His light irony has been transformed into complete skepticism. The victory of Dionysus over Apollo seems definitive and irremediable.

From an eminent height the Spectator observes the panorama with a sharp eye. Alert to the tremendous cultural murmurs of the times, he gratefully receives the recent publications which the intellectual tide casts at his feet. His own production represents in no small part his interior reaction to the books which he reads. He strikes us as not so much an original and systematic philosopher as a cosmic mirage which marvelously reproduces the cultural silhouette of our time.

His Uncomprehended Work

In the presence of the ripened grain of his work, Ortega gives himself up to serious reflections. The future of his work seems to make him uneasy. Till now his message has not been understood. "Can a Spaniard hope," he exclaims not without bitterness, "that some fellow citizen should feel an interest in the secret of that which is his life?"⁸¹ From a Spaniard it is useless to hope for "adventurous explorations in search of the humanity around him."

Not only has the general public failed to understand him fully, but not even his closest friends have read to the depths. He tells us, "Sometimes I find myself surprised at the fact that not even those closest to me have so much as a remote idea of what I have thought and written. Distracted by my imagery they have missed my thought."⁸²

And he continues in the same tone lamenting the fact that no one has evaluated the scope, importance, and influence of his famous vital reason—destined, in his judgment, to solve the perennial dispute between the mind and reality. That is to say, his outstanding philosophical work, *The Modern Theme*, up to now has not been understood despite its wide diffusion. He vigorously protests against those who stigmatize him as a vitalist shielding himself in his own rationalism.

Hardly a year passed before his pent-up resentment burst forth on a new note. Twenty years of silence authorize him, in his judgment, to speak once more. Yet on this occasion he congratulates himself that finally there has been someone who will quote one of his works

with full understanding. And strangely enough, he refers to an Argentine writer, the philosopher Francisco Romero, "perhaps the only Spanish-speaking individual," in Ortega's judgment, "who begins to notice with concreteness and precision what has been thought in Spain during the past twenty years with an originality so superior as to be suspect. . . ." ⁸³

Perhaps Ortega no longer remembers that years ago he stated that "in the Hispano-American world the greater portion of the writers are of such a frivolous intellectual condition, so poorly acquainted with affairs, and so bold in speaking of them that contact with more prudent people is dangerous. . . ." ⁸⁴

After eulogizing the Argentine writer, Ortega laments that "in Spain they do not yet know how to read well; they skim through books. . . . I have not protested in the least," he says, "that my writings have been considered merely literary. I speak now when it is no longer necessary. Nevertheless, it would have been preferable that this beginning of recognition had occurred before rather than after my books (which as books have never been pretentious) have been 'babelized,' translated into many languages." ⁸⁵

He then notes that Señor Romero was far from exhausting the depth of his thought. For this reason he sketches a brief explanation of his ideas on the subject, so dear to him, of vital reason. Briefly, he asserts that rationalism has led to irrationalism due to the fact that reason has been uprooted from life. As a remedy he offers rational vitalism, amply expounded in *The Modern Theme* which, in his judgment, "is what Dilthey had wished to say and wished to think without having accom-

plished it." Finally, he declares that while Dilthey "remained a prisoner of his irrationality," he had discovered "that new rationalism of life."³⁶

Clearly, Ortega attempts by every means to justify and to vindicate himself. One involuntarily has the impression that Ortega distrusts his own works.

Sad is Ortega's fate! After so many fluctuations, advances, and retreats, one loses sight of his true thought. In philosophy it is dangerous to follow the whims of a poet. For example, he calls himself anti-idealistic, while his writings, even the most recent, loudly proclaim his radical idealism.³⁷ He condemns skepticism in one place and extols it in another. In words he rejects agnosticism, although he professes it by his actions.

The Relativist

Ortega is not a systematic and constructive philosopher. His fluctuating and versatile thought lacks internal cohesion and unity. It is circumstantial and relative, yielding to the solicitations of environment. For Ortega, truth is a matter of appreciative living. Each man, each race, each era is a unique and necessary perspective of the universe. Neither does he attack problems impartially. He deliberately allows basic prejudices to blind him. He conceals objective reality with skillful sleight of hand.

If in his eagerness to exalt Germanic ways it is necessary for him to deny the existence of the Latin culture, he does not hesitate for an instant. He tramples history under foot. He declares Descartes, Galileo, Donatello, and Michelangelo to be German.³⁸ Not only this; blind

to Christian values, he states that Europe owes its existence to the German principles of personal will and to the feeling of autonomous independence in opposition to the state and to the universe.³⁹ The new criterion of truth is fidelity to the historical moment. Truth becomes a creature of fashion.

It would be useless to search through the many volumes which now compose the Ortega *opera omnia* for a single problem treated thoroughly. We do not demand of Ortega a systematic rigidity foreign to his genius and character. But we at least expect that noble and stern loyalty in the positing and solving of problems, that respect for reality which characterizes the true philosopher. Whoever subjects Ortega's philosophical works to an impartial analysis will be convinced that the Madrid philosopher systematically flees from attacking decisive problems.

This is no insignificant and isolated matter. Weighty and important evidence abounds. Let us recall that in *The Modern Theme* Ortega tried to intervene in the fierce battle raging between relativism and rationalism on the subject of truth. He condemns relativism, which seemed to him to be a theory fatally conducive to skeptical, sterile, and suicidal negation. Rationalism he equally rejects as utopian and unhistorical. He planned to harmonize the rights of reason and of life in a higher balance. But when he comes to his solution, far from having subjected this serious problem to a severe analysis he arbitrarily announces the triumph of vital values, thereby depreciating the worth of the intelligence. Without establishing any proof he illogically presents his celebrated theory of perspectivism, alert only to the demands of fashionable

theories. In this very essay, as soon as he has formulated his notions of history, which determines all truth both for an individual and for an era, he establishes his theory of revolutions as having the "nature of universal law," valid for the whole scope of history.

In view of the sobering lesson of the masses in revolt, he abstains from sincerely analyzing "the fundamental deficiencies from which European culture is suffering." He dreads to point openly to the true causes of the immorality which he has glimpsed in the heart of modern culture.

He adopts the same attitude toward the problems proposed in *Dehumanization of Art*, *Ideas y creencias*, etc. He uses beautiful words against agnosticism. He calls it a myopic landscape, a mutilated and narrow panorama in which there is no place for ultimate and decisive questions. But this in no way prevents his work from being sealed off from any consideration of a transcendental nature, from everything outside the realm of experience. Ostentatiously he declares himself anti-idealistic at every step in his writings. But this does not impede him from repeating with indefatigable insistence his adhesion to Kantian principles.

Faced with the grave problem created by his idealistic theory of the ego as self-created and mere activity, he either passes immediately to another subject or excuses himself as too pressed for time.

He argues in favor of his new metaphysics of the vital reason. But as a matter of fact, a doctrine so thoroughly skeptical—which avoids all metaphysical consideration, which declares all truth to be relative and historical, which is based on the positivistic and contingent, and

whose only guide is fidelity to whimsical environment—cannot claim for itself the title of metaphysical unless one wishes to play with words. Moreover, in what does that “vital reason” consist? In *The Modern Theme*, where Ortega explicitly studies this question, he concedes the primacy to the vital values in such a way that reason becomes the slave of vitality, a mere biological instrument. In his later writings reason is abandoned even in name; thus in *Historia como sistema* the vital reason is entitled “historical reason,” although its prerogatives are no greater. Reason is relative, historical, a product of vital evolution. Finally, in *Ideas y creencias* reason and fantasy are jumbled. Skepticism is in control. Do not these facts seem to show that Ortega fears to attack sincerely the serious problems which he has proposed to himself? If Ortega is interested merely in culture why did he take up metaphysical subjects? And if he is a true philosopher, why does he refuse to solve the problems?

Ortega and Goethe

It is interesting to observe the severe censure which Ortega imposes on Goethe's conduct. In his eyes the Weimar favorite is a perpetual deserter from himself. His life is a series of flights. He refuses to fit into his destiny. His ambition is to be always ready for change. Nevertheless, in Ortega's judgment, life urged him to live fully, “to be something irrevocably.”⁴⁰ For there is truth in existence, adds Ortega, only when we feel our acts as absolutely necessary.

Goethe, says Ortega, came to feel a mixture of terror

and hatred before everything which demanded an irrevocable decision.⁴¹

Is not this the case with Ortega himself? For a time he might be said to be describing his own tragedy in the person of the Weimar fugitive. Actually, it has been his own custom never to take decisive stands. The path of his thought is a perpetual zigzag. He has no other system than that of having none and of avoiding all final commitment. He jumps from rationalism to irrationalism. He retracts his culturalistic convictions. He embraces existential philosophy. But he accepts it in such a way that he will not seem to be obligated by its principles. He intended to defend the privileges of human life, enslaved, in his opinion, by the rationalist intellect. Nevertheless, at the end of his adventure we find only the most tragic nihilism. Illusion and fantasy take the place of both scientific and philosophical ideas. Fiction and mirage are the most venerable beliefs. Reality is an enigma proposed to our existence. Ortega feared the truth; like Goethe he felt a horror for all irrevocable decision.

II

Historicism¹

The Embryology of Values

IN ORTEGA'S OPINION WILHELM DILTHEY IS THE MOST important philosopher of the second half of the nineteenth century. Eminently wise, gifted with a deep culture, he consecrated his life to a zealous and persevering historical investigation. He championed history's cause and his thought has influenced wide sections of contemporary philosophy. Heidegger and Ortega have been inspired by his writings.

He was born at the height of the positivistic era and reacted against its tyrannical influence. The great teachers of German romanticism seduced him. Lessing, Novalis, Hoelderlin, and Goethe were objects of his passionate study. This deep love for romanticism would never be entirely extinguished in Dilthey's spirit. Schleiermacher awakened no less sympathy in his soul. From him he inherited that religious fluidity, evolutionary and free from all dogmas, which is founded wholly on sentiment.

Dilthey, son of a Protestant pastor, switched from theo-

logical studies to historical investigation. The great movement initiated by Humboldt, Savigny, Niebuhr, and others, culminated at that time in Bopp, Mommsen, Grimm. The historical disciplines in full bloom required a rational justification. The project undertaken by Kant in the camp of the physico-mathematical sciences Dilthey planned to carry to completion in the historical field.

Kant, like the majority of his contemporaries, placed history in the sphere of the probable, lacking universality and rational necessity. It should not be forgotten that for Kant science is a universal and necessary knowledge. Dilthey in his battle against triumphant positivism planned to grant full validity to the sciences of the spirit against those of nature. He wished to clarify their peculiar structure, their distinction from the physical order, their autonomous character. Already the Neo-Kantian Windelband in his *Praeludien* had marked out the characteristics of an historical science with its own methods. Windelband pleaded for the extension of the scope of Kantian reason. Kant had relegated history to the field of the probable, and he gave it scientific value by presenting it with its own proper categories. He also urged that critical philosophy (philosophy as a theory of the sciences) establish the universality and necessity of those values to which history owes its scientific character. The historical science needs a universally valid system of values which would carry out on the historical plane the same function that *Pure Reason's* system of principles achieves on the theoretical level.

Those values should not be deduced from a theoretical study of man but should be sought throughout human activity. History should be transformed into a medium of

philosophy and should acquire a validity equal to that of the natural sciences. It was Windelband's ambition to discover beyond the world of law the kingdom of values. The world is a laboratory for the revelation of values, a sort of externalized incarnation of the spirit. Nevertheless, the most secret desire of this Neo-Kantian was to establish the "embryology of values," its genetic reconstruction, the integral and historical analysis of the hierarchical succession of its forms. The actual inquiry, however, was reserved for Dilthey.

The Critique of Historical Reason

Dilthey's original desire was to confer validity and rational basis on the moral and social-political sciences. Faithful to the Kantian spirit, he pretended to reinstate the "critique of historical reason" alongside the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which legislates in the physico-mathematical world.

Like Kant, Dilthey began his investigation by inquiring: How are history and the sciences of the state and of societies possible? Then he took up his search for the conditions of this possibility.

Influenced by the atmosphere of his day, Dilthey began from extreme empiricism. Experience was considered as the reality of self-awareness. Nevertheless, the fact of consciousness itself was manifested to him as something interconnected forming one indissoluble whole, not as atomized into innumerable elements as the associationist psychology pretended. Knowledge itself appeared to him a part of the total conscience, and to be explained as a

function of conscience. Everything finds its explanation and reason in conscience. Therefore, one science of the total conscience, a new psychology opposed to the associationistic which deformed reality, is imperative. Its object will be integrally and without abstractions to capture the reality which is manifested in consciousness. It will not be explanatory but descriptive and structural.

The creation of that new science, however, would demand a previous inquiry to clarify the nature, content, and limits of the human conscience. Data obtained by analysis of one's own self-awareness would not suffice. It would be necessary to be present at history in the making. But, as Ortega notes, such a method would inevitably involve a vicious circle.² Really, history needs to be based on a fundamental knowledge of man, but this must in its turn be drawn, at least in part, from history.

Disillusioned, Dilthey abandoned the search for his new psychology. He adopted what he called reflection on oneself (*Selbstbesinnung*), which Ortega translates as self-knowledge, that is, immediate analysis of that which is presented in the conscience with neither falsifications nor abstractions.

In this way Dilthey established conscience as the unique reality which we are able to comprehend. To explain something is to show its connection within the conscience. This German philosopher, as Ortega recognizes, remained a prisoner of subjective positivism. Dilthey never formulated his thought clearly and systematically. As Ortega wisely observes, quoting G. Misch, "he was lost in the transit on the way from intuition to reason."³ He was incapable of giving conceptual form to his intuition. Of his celebrated "historical reason" he left us only

a rough draft and a disorganized batch of categories. With these scattered fragments, let us attempt to reconstruct the ideal body of his thought.

Personal Experience (*Erlebnis*)

We might say that the method adopted by Dilthey was the analysis of whatever is presented in the consciousness. The fundamental structure, the psychological unity which we find here is personal vital experience (*Erlebnis*). That is the keystone of the sciences of the spirit, the supreme criterion of truth. Consequently it is important to examine closely its true meaning.

For Dilthey, *Erlebnis* is above all an immediate perception. In it there is no dualism of subject and object, since it is formed by the consciousness of a psychical state or process. It consists in a transparent turning in on oneself antecedent to the distinction of subject and object. It is a feeling pregnant with evaluation, one which gives meaning to the world. Doubt is impossible, for *Erlebnis* reposes in a state of immediate and incontestable consciousness. Its presence and the consciousness of it coexist in our interior perception. Personal experience is an immanent reality. My consciousness and that of which I am conscious cannot be separated. When analyzed, personal experience is revealed to be a permanent structure, immanent and logical on which perceptions and representations, feelings and evaluations are based. *Erlebnis* involves a true state of awareness.

Continuing our analysis, we also discover in personal experience two other fundamental substructures: expres-

sion and understanding (*Ausdruck, Verstehen*). Sciences of the spirit are valid on the supposition that personal experience remains integral in the expression which represents it. Expression, as Dilthey says, springs forth immediately from the soul without the aid of reflection. Expression can be psychically richer than introspection. It illumines depths which no analysis can clarify. That which in personal experience flutters in chaotic muteness is seized in the expression, which is creative. It determines, it amplifies, it bestows form and meaning on the emotion from which it proceeds. Its task is to elevate and to give meaning to life, arresting it in its indetermined flow. Understanding consists in the interpretation of that which is contained in the subjective depths of lived-out experience.

Through the triple function of personal vital experience, expression, and understanding the spirit becomes objective. It is by studying those historical objectivities which integrate culture that man manifests himself completely. Therefore, only in history can man be known to himself, not merely by means of introspection. With introspection alone we cannot integrally embrace human nature. Whatever man may be, only history can say. History is the experience of the species' development through the centuries. Man knows himself in his cultural manifestations throughout the range of historical experience. Hegelian inspiration can be noted in these ideas.

It is false, Dilthey says, to speak of one human nature, universal and abstract, identical in all men. A man exists only in the sum of his manifestations. Pure life, before manifesting itself, is obscure, chaotic. Introspection is not a sure way of arriving at the noumenon. The human be-

ing needs other human beings to express himself and to define himself. If it were possible to reach the essence of the being by introspection, historical sciences would be useless. Therefore, to know man it is indispensable to study him in his historical objectivity: religion, art, law, science. History is meant to be the instrument of philosophy. From it the essence of man springs forth. Man is historical. History is the diary which the rational being writes of himself; the autobiography of the human spirit.

Categories of Historical Reason

The analysis of conscience and its fundamental structures has shown that the spirit makes itself objective through the triple operation of living experience, expression, and understanding. Starting from living experience, it is important to determine the succession of forms, categories, and functions through which the historical world is constituted.

The sciences of the spirit spring forth from the uninterrupted flow of life. The organizing process of the spiritual world differs from that of the natural world in that it creates values and achieves ends. Natural sciences, on the contrary, are based on artificial methods; they destroy the true and proper quality, the irreducible factor, because they depend upon abstraction. Historical life is a permanent creation. Individuals, nations, cultures are the guardians and fashioners of values. It is the historian's task to find the source of values, to compare them, to establish their relationship, in a word, to arrange them in extensive syntheses. To do this one must see history in

the making. As a fundamental postulate of the new critique Dilthey set up the limits of all historical phenomena, of every social and human act, the relativity of all faith and dogmatic systems. Absolute relativism is the fundamental postulate of Diltheyan ideology.

The real categories of the historical reason diametrically differ from the formal categories of natural science. No natural category is valid in the world of the spiritual sciences. The opposition between the two is irreconcilable. In this way Dilthey believed he could conquer naturalism. It must be emphasized that Dilthey did not complete the systematic deduction of the categories of historical reason. Hence the obscurity of his thought.

Here are the principal real categories. The category of meaning is the widest and most important. It is not reducible to the physical world. Actually, the natural sciences are constituted by eliminating from their dominion the concepts of value and of purpose. A physical law does not produce emotional repercussions in us; it does not excite ideas of purpose or value. On the other hand, every historical fact reveals a meaning, a tendency, an interior form. The notion of meaning refers to the structure of understanding. It includes the relation of a sensible exterior thing to something interior of which it is the expression. To understand Napoleon and his era, the statistics of soldiers killed in battle are not enough. The revolutionary ideology must be grasped as present, along with the then fashionable ideas and sentiments, the new notions of patriotism, and so forth.

Following immediately are the categories of value, purpose, development, formation, ideal, essence, action, connection, relation, structure, etc.

The merit of this fragmentary deduction of the categories lies in its power to delineate an embryogeny of the spirit. It is based on the desire to show the transfer from the more simple functions of the psychical life to the superior and complicated operations of reflection, of art, of religion, and of the concept of the world (*Weltanschauung*). Dilthey pretended to emphasize the uninterrupted connection and flow of living experience, which, thanks to the triple operation of consciousness, reaches objectivity in the more sublime cultural manifestations.

In the heart of all art, science, philosophy, and religion this German philosopher thought he discovered a psychical and relative element, the historical product of an individual, of a society, and of an era.

The World and the Self

Dilthey intended to solve the unending battle over the problem of the reality of the exterior world with a strange theory that reveals Fichte's influence. According to Dilthey the reality of the exterior world is not deduced from a conceptual synthesis but from a synthesis of life which is achieved in the impulse, in the will, and in the feeling. The experience of the ego and of the object is had by a single indivisible act. The act of self-awareness which affirms the ego is identical and simultaneous with that which affirms the surrounding world. Ego and world are correlative and inseparable. An objective world independent of the conscience is indemonstrable. To separate the ego from the world is abstraction, a fundamental falsification of the original personal experience. The self

is indissolubly and fundamentally united to the world where it encounters resistance to itself. But the reality of things is not exclusively had in the act of knowledge. We find the external world by recalling the series of clashes which our will has suffered. Maine de Biran held similar ideas.⁴ Nevertheless, the reality itself remains mute, beyond our reach. The mystery of the world is undecipherable. Life retains a secret residue which defies all analysis. The opposition of these ideas (Kantian agnosticism) to those expressed shortly before in the theory of expression should be noted.

In view of the mysterious and confounding forces of life, man is left confused and disconcerted. To orientate himself he must know, touch, test those forces, and form a rule of conduct regarding them. The end of all knowledge is action. To act and to live, man needs to fashion an idea about the world, a cosmic vision (*Weltanschauung*). In analyzing this vision or concept we find three stages. The experience of life (*Lebenserfahrung*) brings forth the cosmic image (*Weltbild*). This in turn produces the ideal of life (*Lebensideal*)—behavior in the face of the mysterious forces of existence. The various concepts of the world (*Weltanschauungen*) arise from the objectivization of what the living man experiences, now by representation and perception, now by applying his will to things.

Personal Experience and Art

Dilthey planned to clarify the figure of the artist, to remove all mystery from him. The typical procedure of art

is to transform and elaborate mental images and representations. The end of esthetics is to study these transformations. For Dilthey, the poet is above all a visionary. He is characterized by the precision, multiplicity, and interest of his images, his clear expression and strong feeling. Art for him is a lavish and superfluous activity dealing with the emotions of life, an unburdening of energy, as it were. The mission of poetry is to exalt vital energy.

Art and life go on in a close embrace. Art is the activity of fancy. In its source it is hardly distinguished from the activity which engenders myths, taboos, dances, fables, etc. The dream is the first metaphorical activity, the father of poetry. Art is a transfigured release from a vain delirium. Emotion agitated by the vital experience is the source of poetry. The first form of art is the lyric—the objectivization of vitality. Every artistic work of a superior style is the fruit and expression of a living experience molded by emotion and elevated to universal validity.

The artistic process is mysterious. It implies the magic transformation of an internal fact. Dilthey stigmatized as absurd the disinterested and objective esthetics which pretends to divorce art from the intimate emotions. True art germinates in the heart of life. Every great cultural manifestation is preceded by deep transformations of the collective conscience. We recall Homeric Greece and the Renaissance. Goethe and Schiller followed the Revolution, writing in the midst of the Napoleonic din. Calm eras, periods of crystallized and traditional life, only produce imitative phenomena, reproductions of ancient forms; for example, the Alexandrian, Byzantine, Arcadian.

Dilthey insisted that art mirrors life. The great crea-

tions are historical and relative to their media. The dramatic technique of Lope de Vega is modeled on the needs of the Spanish public, fanatic for great undertakings and deeds of honor but impatient with prolonged action. Carnavalesque buffoonery, quick changes of scene, and sublimity appear in Shakespeare thanks to the influence of the Italian Renaissance. The gravity and befittingness of the language, the courtly manners of Versailles inspired the perfect structure of French tragedy. Wagner, Ibsen, and Hebbel are typical manifestations of romanticism, the enemy of society, the mood which looks upon love as an escape. A given type of poetical structure reflects the historical culture from which it issues. This notion of the typical in the great pieces of art is basic in Dilthey. The classical authors of a nation are in his judgment the marvelous overflow of an era. Homer sang of epic battles. The medieval songs of legendary romance describe that period's adventurous and heroic life. Dickens and Dostoyevsky drew their characters from contemporary life. Consequently, every artistic form proves to be relative and historical. It is absurd to speak of a human nature universally identical. The perpetual fluctuation of the literary types is eloquent proof.

Art is the first expression of the prevailing culture. More than anything else it shows the great historical changes. The development of world-views or of metaphysical systems is mirrored in poetry. Art interprets the collective soul of an historical era.

The Philosophy of Philosophy

For the historicist thinker philosophy represents the code of values created by a given generation, its typical way of reacting to the universe. The peculiarity of philosophy, as opposed to religion and art, is its tendency to universality, stability, and validity. When a conception of the world (*Weltanschauung*) is elevated to the distinction of absolute validity, it is called metaphysics. Dilthey affirms that every world-vision plants its roots in the heart of a man in a certain historical period. It is nourished by his impulses, by his feelings, preoccupations, and ideals. An eternal and absolute concept of the world (*sub specie aeternitatis*), in the manner of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibnitz, is illusory and false.

On the ruins of ancient metaphysics Dilthey aspired to raise a new science, "the philosophy of philosophy." His object was to reconstruct the genetic process of the philosophical systems or world-views, using the notions of historical evolution and the comparative method. Philosophy should be proposed as an object of study insofar as it is a human historical fact. The metaphysical era has passed. In the future it will be possible only as a reflection on past systems, as philosophy of philosophy. Dilthey's method consists in showing how the principles which are elevated to a category beyond experience are no more than extensions or generalizations of scientific knowledge, forms of life, cosmological ideas, moral norms, and religious dogmas.

For Dilthey it is an axiom that metaphysical systems are perpetually unstable and incapable of satisfying the needs of science. Every view of the world and of life,

every work of art, expresses one of the possible systems of man's relation to the universe. Every philosophical system offers us a view of the universe such as it appears through some important personality.

Any system of thought which pretends to know the essence of the world necessarily falls victim of illusion. Metaphysics is condemned to insoluble contradictions. It is impossible to fix the attention on the heart of reality. When we intend to form an idea of it, we only project our own psychic activity over it. The analytical principles themselves lack that higher validity. Metaphysics is impossible as a science. Philosophy is only a chapter in the history of the human spirit. Reflection on culture (*Kulturgeschichte*) is Dilthey's philosophy. It has no end in itself. Its object is limited to purifying existing theories in science, art, and religion to give them unity. Philosophy refines the materials which science provides.

Philosophical systems file before Dilthey's gaze as an interminable caravan of approximations, of fluctuating phantasms produced by our desires, which remain dissatisfied with our understanding of the ever-enigmatic and inaccessible universe. For Dilthey the history of philosophy is a labyrinth of errors. Its pages distill confusion and skepticism. Against Socrates who founded science stands Protagoras who reduced science to mere sensations. Against the medieval realists, the nominalists point to the loss of prestige of the universal idea, now reduced to an empty phrase, a *flatus vocis*. Against Descartes and Leibnitz, Hume raises the negative doubt.

Skepticism accompanies metaphysics like a shadow. We are imprisoned by our own sensations. Causes cannot be known. The reality of the external world cannot

be demonstrated. Sensory impressions are relative, and conclusions may not be drawn from the data which they present. The very principle of causality is a relation introduced by us into things, and its application to the external world is illegitimate. Every view of the world (*Weltanschauung*) has arisen from a particular living experience, as the symphony at the invocation of a theme. Philosophy must yield its place to historiography, which is destined to restore the bond between philosophical activity and the other cultural values to which it gives unity and validity.

Living Experience and Cosmic Vision

Dilthey held that the conceptions of the world are arranged into three great orders: objective idealism, idealism of liberty, and mechanical determinism. Each individual enters into relation with the universe according to one of these types and is blind to the others. This attitude is based on the native living experience peculiar to each individual. The world can be comprehended only with the aid of one of these fundamental categories. Only one aspect of our relations with the world is accessible to us. To know the essence of the real it would be necessary to apply the great categories simultaneously. According to Dilthey the failure of all metaphysics is rooted in this intrinsic impossibility of the human intellect to consider reality in the light of the triple scheme. Every idea is embodied in a determined cosmic vision and is not transferable to the other two. The three great types of world concepts fail when they come to the ineffable, the ulti-

mately insoluble problems. The secret of the universe is undecipherable.

The origin of this theory has to be sought for in the Kantian antinomies, insoluble by Pure Reason. The conflict between these three fundamental ideas is perpetual. None can claim superiority over the others. Dilthey's three fundamental schemes reproduce the Kantian triad of critiques: nature, art, and morality.

Conclusion

Under the double influence of positivism and of Kantian ideas, Dilthey reduced reality to the expression of conscience. Loyal to his teacher Kant, he rejected metaphysics as a science. To it he assigned the role of a relative and historical concept of the world. Philosophical systems come to be objectivizations of cosmological ideas, of insoluble contradictions. The critique itself, symbol of primitive terror before the absolute, is the fruit of a particular era. Truth is an immanent and subjective living experience. The only thing which determines the validity of a system is the spirit of the time, the movement and force of opinion, the command of fashion and of custom. Philosophical taste is the force which periodically casts down the idols currently in vogue.

Everything arises from poetry, from dreams, and everything returns to them. Science, technology, cosmology are developments and amplifications of metaphors. There are no eternal truths. Each truth was valid in its time and in its era. Man is known through the process of cosmic visions. In Dilthey relativism shows itself the legitimate

heir to Kantian idealism. In its insoluble contradictions are sketched the inevitable and unavoidable plurality of concepts of the world and of life.

Dilthey's was an ironic destiny. Perhaps he thought that his doctrine had to cut forever the wings of the human spirit and imprison it in the sensible and the historical. Maybe he believed that the era of metaphysical speculation would remain conclusively defeated under the attack of his work. On the contrary, the vigorous metaphysical flowering in our day recognizes in him an inspired precursor.

Critical Notes

Dilthey's fate was tragic. He aspired to refute naturalism, and he established the act of conscience as the only reality. This initial error vitiated the whole of his later thought. Incarcerated in the narrow limits of his own subjectivity, he rejected metaphysics and closed the way to the absolute, to Being. Subjectivism and relativism were inevitable. In his idealistic theory of the ego and the world he closely followed Fichte. Fichte taught that the external world, the objective phase of being, is born in its mental representation for practical reason and as a necessary term of moral activity. For this German idealist all knowledge is in its essence practical, orientated to activity and obligation. Knowledge is action. The identity of the subject and the object, postulated by Dilthey in the act of cognition, is also of Fichtean inspiration, no less than the negation of being-in-itself (*ens ut sic*), objective and real. "Can you think of something," Fichte asked,

"without consciousness of it, or think of consciousness entirely determined without the thing which it represents and which determines it?" "Why should you seek to go out of yourself, or jump over yourself and try to reach something . . . without consciousness and without the thing?"⁵ "Do you know anything without being conscious of it? Can you with your conscience and (granting that this is inseparable from your being) with your being, pass over or transcend the determinations of conscience?"⁶

Blind to all metaphysical reality, Dilthey considered history as a product of conscience, as an objectivization of the human spirit. Studying the cultural horizons, he believed that he had discovered the only reality in the relativity of all historical form. His philosophy of philosophy, while intended to supplant metaphysics, proclaimed the justification of skepticism. The new criterion of truth is the spirit of the time, fidelity to the historical moment. Reality in itself is unknowable. The mystery of the world has no solution. Dilthey's ideological adventure culminated in the most desolate skepticism. The German philosopher with bitter radicalism carried to their extreme the principles of disintegration contained in Kant's critique. In the theoretical order man, according to Dilthey, cannot break the iron bonds of his own consciousness. A conception of the world (*Weltanschauung*), the highest peak to which the human mind can aspire, is no more than mirage and empty chimera.

In the moral order Dilthey had no respect for the three postulates of Kant's practical reason. God disappears in the pantheistic shadow; indeed, logically He should be denied as being a metaphysical reality. The same must be said of the soul's immortality. As for liberty, it is diffi-

cult for it to co-exist with the deterministic theory of the three type-ideas.

No more acceptable is his pretension to unite philosophy with history. Such confusion can only cause the destruction of the two disciplines. In all this there is the positivist prejudice of considering philosophy as a mere theory of the sciences, without its own proper object. Such an attitude is, from every aspect, one-sided and narrow. It starts from the gratuitous prejudice that our knowledge cannot pass the boundaries of the sensible order.

From another point of view Dilthey's position is quite clear. The failure of his work, his inability to unify his thought, was due in no small part to the vicious circle created by his psychology and history which are incapable of merging into one chaotic science. The end of such an adventure could be nothing else than the most negative skepticism. Dilthey condemned man to intellectual despair, to voluntary nihilism. Is this suicidal outlook acceptable?

As Ortega himself recognizes, historical relativism "is ultimately skepticism," and skepticism "is a suicidal theory," "a failure."⁷ All comment is superfluous.

The reader himself can deduce Dilthey's influence on Ortega's thought by recalling what has been said. Three works primarily reveal Dilthey's ideological stamp: first, *Historia como sistema* in which Ortega explicitly adopts the term "Historical Reason"; secondly, *Ideas y creencias* in which, it should be remembered, Ortega teaches that man, faced with the enigma of life, fabricates cultural worlds, that is, concepts of the world.

But no writing reflects with greater clarity and frank-

ness the growing influence of Dilthey than that which serves as a preface to E. Bréhier's *History of Philosophy*. In mature, serenely classical prose and not without a certain solemnity Ortega there links together the fundamental concepts of his ideology.

Champion of historicism, he loudly proclaims "that there are no eternal ideas. Every idea is irremediably inscribed in the situation or circumstance in relation to which it plays its active part and achieves its destiny."⁸

The pretension of every philosophical system of attributing to itself an absolute and universal truth is naïve and false. "The impossibility," says Ortega, "of absolutely dominating the universe of reality from a single point of view gives a clear meaning to the existence of various fundamental concepts whose plurality seems to us to be unavoidable. In the irrational multiplication of past philosophies an outline of historical reason is already drawn."⁹

If philosophy is only a cultural precipitate, as transitory and relative as the era from which it proceeds, the mission of all genuine philosophy will be to battle without respite against the dogmatic and traditional philosophy; "to reject it and to retire to the terrible solitude of its own musing."¹⁰

The true philosopher, in Ortega's opinion, should exert himself to "reproduce in his person, even though it be only approximate, that original situation in which philosophy was born."¹¹ We must start from philosophical nothingness, from the sheer necessity of philosophizing. . . ."¹² As Goethe, Ortega warns us: "That which you inherited from your ancestors conquer if you would possess it." This conquest, "this fierce retreat toward your

original source in which one tears down and rips apart all systems in order to assist again at philosophy's birth, this is essentially the history of philosophy."¹³

In this way Ortega identifies philosophy with its history through the ages. "Philosophy," Ortega says, "is thus the history of philosophy."¹⁴

Having identified philosophy with history, Ortega is not afraid to deduce the somber consequences of his radical theory. "We do not think," he says, "we do not need to think that our philosophy is definitive, but we submerge it as any other thing into the historical flood of the corruptible. This means that we see all philosophy as constitutively an error, our own as well as the others. But even being an error, it is all that it ought to be, because it is the genuine mode of thinking of each epoch and of every philosopher."¹⁵

Seen from this perspective, the history of philosophical thought becomes "the history of errors; necessary errors," as Ortega says, for "other ages needed to commit them in order that our age might be able to avoid them."¹⁶

But what does it mean to speak of truths or errors when one is not reluctant to state that "that which is called truth always implies more or less an error?"¹⁷ Can error exist where the truth is impossible? Yet the fundamental thesis of historicism—"there are no absolute truths"—is for the historicist an absolute truth!

Like every system built on error, historicism collapses under the weight of its own disintegrating principles.

III

The Existentialist Outlook

Human Life

THE NAME EXISTENTIALISM DESIGNATES THE PHILOSOPHICAL theory which sees in human life the fundamental reality, the fact to which everything else must be referred. An enemy of all abstraction, it wishes to philosophize by beginning with the concrete flesh-and-bone man in his immediate reality of here and now. The intellect, incapable of attaining the real, is for the individual an instrument at the service of his vital needs. Existentialism fully adopts the theory of positivistic biological knowledge. Though beyond the reach of intelligence, reality and being reveal their mysteries to the feeling and to the emotions. Anguish is the secret way which leads to transcendency, to being.

Ortega agrees with the Heideggerian tradition in admitting the primacy of human life and the utilitarian character of the intellect. But faithful to his positivistic ideology, he rejects the possibility of reaching reality, even through emotions. In the Ortegan concept of life

we can distinguish three periods. In the first, life is considered as the highest value. In the second, it is established as the fundamental reality, thanks to the existentialist influence. Finally, in *Ideas y creencias* all reality is declared unknowable and human life becomes an insoluble enigma.

One subject of Ortega's writings is the theme of life as the highest value, as reality which justifies itself. *The Modern Theme* shouts out like a battle cry the triumph of vital values. "Pure Reason must yield its supremacy to vital reason."¹ Culture must be placed at the service of life. But what does it mean to speak of values immanent to life, superior to every other value? What does it mean to say that vitality contains the highest value? Pure vitality, no doubt, is worth while. It constitutes the basis and condition of all value. Nevertheless, it is not true that it occupies the supreme distinction in the hierarchy of values. For the rest, the author does not take the trouble to prove his thesis. He is content with affirmations, and in passing offers us two examples which prove nothing. The first, concerning the pure-blooded horse, does not touch the point, for we are not treating of life in general but of human life. The second, in which he tells us of the magnificent, attractive human animal (referring to Napoleon), is disputable.²

Aside from this, Ortega himself recognizes, at least implicitly, the falsity of this thesis when he affirms years later that man has no ambition to be in the world, "his desire is to be well; for him life means not merely to be but to be well."³

Such a radical change is but in obedience to the influence of the new ideas. The concept of life as the high-

est value yields its position to the new current which establishes human existence as the fundamental reality. It should not be forgotten that for Ortega there is no other norm of truth than the docile submission to the message of the time.

The Ortegan theory of life as the fundamental reality is inspired in this second period by the ideas of Heidegger and Dilthey. The phrases in which he defines life as fundamental insecurity are in the Heideggerian style: "the feeling of a shipwrecked mariner in a mysterious element, strange and frequently hostile";⁴ the falling prisoner to an inexorable environment⁵ in which we suddenly find ourselves without knowing how.

From Dilthey he adopts the term, "life as history," as vital, nontransferable history. From Fichte he receives the theory that life is mere activity, a task (*Tathandlung*), and the practical nature of all knowledge. This is a doctrine which Ortega shares with Heidegger and Dilthey.

Nevertheless, in Ortega the theory of human existence has an accentuated tinge of skepticism.⁶ Ortega clings to it as to a life preserver, disillusioned with all other reality. With faith lost in God and in reason, "man retains only his disillusioned living."⁷ But Ortega even renounces that disillusioned living. Carrying the positivistic and agnostic principles to their extreme, he admits that the basic reality "is pure enigma." The intellectual interpretation which we form of it is fanciful and illusory.⁸ Every effort to explore the secret of man and of the universe is condemned to failure. In its very essence science is as imaginary as poetry.

Regarding Heidegger's theory on human existence as fundamental reality, it must be confessed that it implies

serious errors. Above all, it professes subjective empiricism. It reduces all cognitional faculties to the sensitive order. Moreover, its concept of transcendental existence is idealistic. It thus ignores the existence of God. It denies the possibility of knowing reality through a rational approach. It attributes to one faculty or emotional state the mission of putting us in contact with the real. The origin of this error, which pretends to assign cognitional capacity to sentiment or emotion, lies principally in the fact that it is adopted as a basis for existential analytics, a confused emotional state in which a sincere and rigorous analysis would discover clearly intellectual elements.

Without prejudice let us consult our internal experience. We observe that the will and the feelings do not create their objects. To wish and to desire something requires previous knowledge. The old scholastic adage—*nil volitum quin praecognitum*—is still completely valid; it is impossible to desire that which is totally unknown, unless we wish to abuse words. Certainly sentiment and emotion can give bulk and warmth to the cognitional act. They can lend it force and vigor. But in themselves they are incapable of grasping realities of any order, much less metaphysical. It might be said that emotion and sentiment create their objects by means of the a priori emotions, as Scheler held. But this is to employ an idealistic and subjective theory which on the one hand proposes a value of absolute validity and on the other hand still lacks objectivity or reality.

Clearly, existentialism, empiric in its origins, culminates in idealism, in relativistic subjectivism. From here to the skeptical position is hardly a step. Did not Heidegger conclude by embracing nothingness?

Existential Contingency

In Ortega's existentialist writings there is an expression which because of its mysteriousness and its repetition well merits a serious analysis. "For the sake of life," he says, "I have been flung out into environment, into the chaotic swarm of things."⁹ In another place we read: "Life is given to us, since we do not give it to ourselves, but we suddenly find ourselves in it and without knowing how."¹⁰ In the prologue to his complete works, Ortega asserts that "to live is to have fallen prisoner to an inexorable environment."¹¹ But why multiply the references? Under a thin allusion a secret and weighty problem throbs throughout these phrases. Man has not given existence to himself. He finds himself thrown into it unexpectedly, without knowing how. It should be noted that Heidegger had already spoken of the limited and helpless character of human existence lost in the immensity of the universe.

It is strange that such a tremendous theme holds its ground both for the German philosopher and for the Spaniard. But has not Ortega affirmed that he could not remain deaf to the following dramatic questions: "Whence comes the world, and where is it going?" "Are we not unable to breathe if confined in a zone of secondary, intermediate themes?" Did he not recognize that "we need an integral perspective of both the foreground and the background, not a mutilated landscape, not an horizon from which the mysterious fascination of the remotest distances has been amputated"?¹² Did he not confess "that this turning one's back on the ultimate problems is called agnosticism"?¹³

In analyzing the structure of human life, Ortega discovers an aperture through which transcendent light filters. In the murky recess of existential immanence, the contingency of man is a skylight open to the absolute. Man has not given himself existence; he has found himself thrown into it without knowing how. Let us submit this simple statement to a calm analysis.

Human existence is contingent. Let us consider a concrete existence. Some years ago it was nothing. Now it exists. It awaits death's frigidity. Within a certain time there will hardly remain a trace of its presence on the planet. Human existence is temporal, ephemeral, contingent. Nevertheless, it now exists. Why? Within the scope of our experience, both sensible and intellectual, nothing is produced without sufficient reason. No phenomenon occurs without its corresponding cause. At times this will remain concealed, but always through its effects we obscurely infer its presence. Now then, this concrete human existence which we are presently considering is an experimental fact. Before, it was not. Now it is. Why?

Let us vault back over the whole series of generations. Let us imagine it as indefinite, interminable, stretched out through time immemorial, beyond all pre-history. But if the individual human existence is contingent, the interminable series will also be such. Connect series to series, chains upon chains of human existence. Multiply them as indefinitely as you wish. All will still be contingent. The problem is not thereby solved. The urgent solution has merely been postponed.

This can only lead to the recognition of an absolute existence, origin and source of all finite and contingent existence. A necessary Being, ultimate cause of every oc-

currence in time. The existential analysis, faithfully carried out, has led us by the hand to the threshold of the absolute, to the predication of a necessary Being.

It will be objected that the use of rational categories, of abstract metaphysical principles, is improper in the dominion of human existence. Truly it is significant that the existentialists, who abominate the intelligence and its concepts, are not at all embarrassed in their writings to take advantage of the intellect and of rational language. Glance at their books. In the tedious and at times obscure existential analyses we find judgments, ratiocinations, deductions, illations which elude, it would seem, the inquisitorial anti-intellectualist censure.

Emotion, anguish, full vital experience is a mute, pre-rational state. Expression gives it clarity, meaning, and logical standing. Language affords it a place in human society. But an analysis shows us that expression implies an ordering activity, it supposes ideas and concepts, a contrast of subject and object, a dualism of the knowing and the known. It demands the formulation of judgments; for example, I am sad, I am distressed, happy. . . . Can this take place in the amorphous recess of pure emotion? Does it not rather suppose the activity of the intellect?

But on what does the existentialist confer the delicate task of granting clarity and meaning to the mute vital experience? Not on the intellect. This can do nothing in the domain of life; its categories are confined to the sphere of the pragmatic. Nor on an emotional faculty, for as we have seen, it is of itself mute and incapable of expression. Moreover, as was established above, the will and the sentiment do not fashion their objects, rather

they receive them from the intellect. Therefore, if the existentialist were consistent, he should reserve for himself, in miserly intimacy, the rich booty of his existential explorations. Otherwise he must resign himself to giving analyses and interpretations adulterated, according to his theory, by the pragmatic nature of the intellect.

Practical Intelligence

It has been shown that Ortega fully subscribes to the positivistic-biological theory of knowledge. According to this doctrine the intellect, incapable of attaining reality, is a mere instrument and tool for the individual's vital needs. It only possesses value "by functioning in a human life moved by the constitutive urgencies of this life."¹⁴

Analyzing this opinion, we discover first of all that it presupposes the brute origin of man. It is enough to remember his evolutionistic ascent.¹⁵ For the rest, Ortega seems to favor anthropological evolution, as we have had occasion to note.¹⁶ Such a position cannot be supported. It implies the absurdity of supposing that the spiritual soul can arise from the brute. And as for the partial anthropological evolution, no conclusive argument in its favor can be cited.

But the Ortegian position, besides being evolutionistic, involves positivism, for it begins from the false supposition that man can only know the experimental and the sensible. And even this scanty knowledge turns out to be of a pragmatic and utilitarian character. "We do not live to think, but on the contrary: we think to survive."¹⁷

It is not, he claims, the task of the intellect (*intus-*

legere) to penetrate to the essence through the sensible accidents, but to organize the data of concrete experience in accord with vital necessities. There is no need now to speak of objective and necessary truths. The true is that which is useful for life.

With flexibility and art Bergson masterfully describes in a now celebrated passage this philosophical viewpoint: "In our opinion it is not the human intelligence that Plato showed us in the allegory of the cave. Its mission does not consist in looking at the series of empty shadows, nor in contemplating the dazzling light from the stars by turning its gaze backwards. Yoked like oxen to a hard task, we feel the play of muscles and joints, the weight of the plow and the resistance of the earth: to be active and to know that you are active, to enter into contact with reality and thus to live, but only in that measure which coincides with the work achieved and the furrow plowed—such is the function of the human intelligence."¹⁸

The natural end of pragmatic positivism is relativism, for truth, in effect, lies bound down to the utility of individuals. These in their turn vary among themselves in many ways. Consequently, for them there will not be one truth, but as many truths as intelligences, and the same in every order. Skepticism is inevitable. That this process has been verified in Ortega is amply proved by considering his ideological development. Nevertheless, in the existentialist tendency a pearl of great value lies hidden among the serious errors: the vehement desire of thought to root itself in life; the ambition to live out the best of one's own ideas.

The divorce of thought from one's own existence is due in great part to the influence of rationalistic idealism.

Nothing is more harmful to the moral life than this tearing apart of man's nature. Truth should not be confined to the upper region of the intelligence: Man is not pure reason. He is also will, passion, impulses. Truth is light. Its mission is to illuminate the way for the will, to dissipate the darkness which obstructs the route. Truth must be lived. It must be converted into a norm for one's own existence. The daily problems which life entails should not be solved by irresponsible impulse or pragmatic calculation, but in the calm light of truth. Only in this way will life be genuine and fruitful. To equalize thought with life, as a poet would say, here is the most noble human aspiration.

In this view nothing is more certain than that truth is also ordered to action, that thought should be placed at the service of life. But it should be noted well that this does not prevent us from reaching reality, nor does it blur our clear vision of things. It is false to contend, as does existentialism, that vital necessities, the a priori ethics, deform the intellectual perception. Those very statements are apriorisms, shameful relics of transcendental idealism. Truth is not deformed, nor is it damaged, in illuminating the path of action.

Man can adopt two views of reality. By speculative knowledge he grasps being in so far as it is true. This is the theoretical, contemplative position. Or he efficiently directs that speculative knowledge to an end; he clarifies his way of action with the principles of theoretical knowledge. This is the practical viewpoint in the face of reality. The will, a blind faculty, must be guided in its activity by the intellect.

Such is the marvelous unity which an impartial analy-

sis reveals in the human being. The separation of the intellect and the will, introduced by Kant, should be absolutely rejected.

Moreover, the biological theory of knowledge supposes the primacy of the will and of action over the intellect. In line with Fichte's ideas, assimilated by Ortega, man is action, mere activity, a job. His end is to actuate, endlessly to unfold his internal possibilities. Knowledge is of secondary importance, subordinated to action.

This theory is permeated with idealism. For the substantial being it substitutes pure activity in perpetual self-creation. That such actualism is merely one phase of Ortega's fluctuation and mental inconstancy is proved by the following texts written in 1910 and 1926. "All philosophers and artists," he states, "who can be considered as authors of that transition from the nineteenth century to the present twentieth which is now flowing through our veins have agreed in their defense of activism. The way of life revolving about the passions and the will is preferred to the intellect and contemplation. To them the primacy of the intelligence seems a stagnation of that vital current which has drawn out from one animal species others more perfect. It is forgotten, they come to say from Schopenhauer to Bergson, that thought, the most delicate phenomenon of Nature, was not conceived by itself, but by a preintellectual faculty, and, therefore, it is in this faculty that we have to seek the norms and meaning of the former. If we are tied down to intellectualism we run the risk of accepting as the whole of existence that which is only its part and instrument. And this would lead to the weakening and decline of the vital pulse. The rhythm of that which Nietzsche called the

ascendent vitality is perceived with greater force in the preintellectual stages." The description of actualism with an evolutionary tinge could not be more explicit. Let us consider its merits.

"Hence when this philosopher [Nietzsche] proclaimed the virtues of that ascendent vitality—formness, the eagerness for dominion, etc.—our ears, accustomed to specifically intellectual values, listened with suspicion, as if it were asking us to return to bestiality."¹⁹

If a condemnation of positivistic pragmatism is now desired, we need but listen. Intelligence, says Ortega, is "to a great extent a useless function, a marvelous organic display, an inexplicable superfluity. And let it not be imagined that the creation of pure science, because it may be a luxury, is a painless activity which does not require effort and suffering. On the contrary, it is even more difficult, more laborious, of a more tremendous force. . . . But the case is still stronger: because if in relating those two forms of science—the practical and useful with the pure and superfluous—we ask ourselves which of them proceeds from the other, we see that the useful is not produced first (that is, the urgent, the necessary and only later, as a consequence, the superfluous and merely theoretical) but, if we consider the process as a whole, the contrary happens. Applied science, technology, is an unforeseen result, an accidental by-product which comes from the purest and most disinterested scientific labor. . . . Intelligence, then, appears to us as an activity which is indulged in primarily as a sport and only secondarily for a utilitarian purpose. It is very important to keep in mind this hierarchy between both forms of intellectuality. Far be it from me to disparage technology

and practical thought; but obviously it must be subject to theoretical science. Without the latter the former could not take a step; as Leonardo da Vinci has said: '*La teoria è il capitano e la pratica sone i soldati*' ["Theory is the general, and practice is his troops"]. . . . Hence it is that nothing so disturbs the work of the intelligence as to introduce into it propositions of utility both individual and collective."²⁰ Can a more explicit refutation of positivistic pragmatism be sought?

If we now try to examine the motives for such a radical ideological change, we once again confirm the fact that the inconstant Ortegian thought is only being faithful to the wind of fashionable opinion.

Ortega *versus* Metaphysics

In the light of these facts it would seem that the claims of some admirers who praise Ortega as an "original and precise metaphysician"²¹ are without meaning. Nothing is more contrary to the truth. Ortegian thought is not metaphysical, and his originality is rather in form than in content.

As an instance of his metaphysics, the phrase "I am myself and my environment" is usually cited for examination. Before all else it should be noted that it pertains to the notable skeptical culturalistic era of the *Meditaciones del Quijote*. "I am myself and my environment": Ortega refers to his concrete, positive ego determined by these peculiar space-time co-ordinations of here and now. He does not consider that ego as a reality in itself, objective and ontological, but as mere activity, a multiple and

phenomenological self.²² But true metaphysical knowledge is universal and necessary, since it is based on the essence of things. Clearly, the two theories are essentially opposed. The Ortega formula is of an empirical and subjective character.

If we now consider the later stages of his intellectual formation, will we there find something metaphysical in appearance? It will not be in *The Modern Theme* where an open relativism is professed. Even less in the existentialist period in which the intellect is enslaved to vital necessities. It is true that he speaks of human life as the fundamental reality, "in the same sense that we have to refer everything else to it since the other realities, actual or presumed, have to appear in it in one way or another."²³ But this human life to which the author alludes "is the life of each individual,"²⁴ the history of his personal experiences, a positive, empirical, and frankly subjective fact. Still more, it is mere activity, that is, a successive series of egos differing among themselves. The being of the living thing, Ortega insists, is "a being always distinct from himself."²⁵ If we now attempt to inquire into the nature of that multiform and successive self, we find that it is not something stable and substantial, but a plan, idea, design of life. Ortega confirms this by saying, "Life means the inexorable compulsion of achieving the design of existence which each one is."²⁶

The investigation has led us to an idealistic ego, mere activity, pure happening. The concept of human life, far from constituting an ontological reality, is destroyed under analysis and is transformed into a vague, subjective, and immanent form. With such a flimsy foundation a strong metaphysical structure cannot arise.

But the author insists. In his opinion the ontological nature of human life is based precisely on that fundamental mutability. The unique absolute is the substantial variation of life. The Spanish philosopher shares with Bergson and Heraclitus the pure happening, the substantial variation of all existence (*πάντα ῥεῖ*). But while the French philosopher, to avoid skepticism, defends intuition, Ortega is victim of the skeptical doubt.

Moreover, it should be noted that to postulate absolute mutation in which nothing substantial is changed, implies serious absurdities. Let us analyze the notion of movement. Three elements necessarily concur. A point of departure, a moving body, and the final destination. Take away even one of the components and you are without real movement. The mutation is bound to the thing in movement with a transcendental, indissoluble relation. Omit the moving body; is not that movement inconceivable and absurd in which nothing substantial is moved? But this is what Ortega defends when he affirms that the ego is a mere design, program of life. A mere happening which happens to no one. A movement in which nothing real is moved.

I will be criticized for this use of intellectual concepts in the affairs of life. But is there any other way of expression besides the concept? Moreover, we have already shown in earlier paragraphs that if the existentialists and vitalists were consistent, they would be reduced to unending silence.

But let us come now to the skeptical phase. Reality is declared unknowable. Intellectual knowledge is fanciful and illusory. But if anyone still doubts, let him see whether it is possible to reconcile an empirical, "essen-

tially circumstantial" work with science which is supported by universal and necessary truths.

In conclusion, no positive data in favor of metaphysics are discovered in the whole range of Ortega's works. On the contrary, contradictory propositions abound. For Ortega metaphysical knowledge is utopian and unhistorical. Utopian because it is elevated over space on the wings of abstraction. Unhistorical because it neglects the individual and concrete data.

Therefore, since Ortega is in no way a metaphysician, only ironically can he be called an "original and precise metaphysician."

Extreme Skepticism

Existentialist systems which deny to the intellect all access to reality are wont to attribute this prerogative to a faculty of emotional and alogical nature: sentiment, intuition, anguish.

But this is not Ortega's thought. Positivist to the marrow, he admits no exceptions from that doctrine. In this phase of his development Ortega swerves away from Heidegger and approaches Dilthey. It will be recalled that for Dilthey the cosmic vision (*Weltanschauung*) represents a relative and historical interpretation of the universe's insoluble mystery. Ortega goes still further. Not only the metaphysical systems but also science, art, religion, in a word, the whole of culture, is reduced to fantasy and mirage. Culture constitutes the way of reacting, proper to each man, before the insoluble enigma of existence. Ortega y Gasset openly proclaims his extreme

skepticism. Has he forgotten that at another time he condemned skepticism, calling it: "suicidal theory" and "failure"?²⁷

Nevertheless, Ortega the skeptic is correct with regard to the culturalists of the past century. Culture cannot of itself justify human life. Culturalism is Christianity without God, as Ortega pointedly observes. In the deserted Christian church the affected piety of the culturalist officiates before the altars of an impersonal and secular trinity: the good, the true, and the beautiful.

Ortega has discovered that culture is a human product, as relative and historical as man. Certainly, his reaction has been excessive in denying all validity to intellectual activity, in restricting culture to the region of the illusory and the fantastic. Nevertheless, he had a right to affirm that the culturalist viewpoint does not vindicate human life.

Man's destiny is too exalted for him to prostrate himself in idolatrous worship before the work of his own higher faculties. It seems evident that culturalism is incapable of bestowing meaning and justification on human life. Really, culture is the patrimony of a few privileged people. How will the immense human multitudes live, urged on, as they are, by peremptory elemental needs? What motive that will make life tolerable can be found by those unnumbered masses who feel disinherited by life? For them the higher culture is forbidden food, prohibited fruit.

Let us be sincere. Let us faithfully face the problem. Has the materialistic culture at any time made men happy? Has it made them better? And as for the culture of the spirit unhappily divorced from morality and re-

ligion, has it provided man today with more justice and love for truth? With more understanding and more humanity? The answer is cruel.

When the history of our tragic age is written, future students will have to charge contemporary philosophical theories with not a little portion of the responsibility for present-day catastrophes. Relativism has been eulogized in our day as the most elevated philosophical viewpoint, and its shadow, skeptical doubt, has introduced into contemporary thought confusion and depreciation of both reason and of its norms. Life has been elevated to the supreme value and with it brute force and the unchained instincts of life. Everyone proclaims rights, conquests, privileges. Obligations are systematically forgotten. The absolute autonomy of the individual before all authority has been preached. Morality has been reduced to a playful and superfluous activity devoid of obligations, sanctions, or norms. No one should be startled by the prevailing terrible consequences. Nations, like individuals, reap what they sow.

When a fatal virus attacks an organism, it will destroy it, if not promptly and efficiently resisted. Today's civilization, corroded by regrettable and virulent ideological bacilli, shows symptoms of a fatal crisis. The virus which destroys the vital centers of our civilization is not merely political, nor merely economical or social; it is above everything else of an ethical and religious nature, and it is called immoralism, revolution, pseudohumanism.

IV

Ortega and Unamuno

TO A SUPERFICIAL OBSERVER AN ABSOLUTE ANTAGONISM separates the personalities of Ortega and Miguel de Unamuno. Enigmatic and arrogant, reserved and aloof, the Sage of the Escorial differs tremendously from the rugged and solitary Basque, the energetic battler who knows no measure and shows no balance. An impetuous soul prone to every type of daring, Unamuno despises reason which weighs, analyzes, dissects, and calculates. He loves the conquering impulse, the passionate giddiness, because "only the passionate achieve truly lasting and fruitful deeds."¹

While Ortegian thought conceals its genuine outline behind the mask of style, Unamuno reveals his tragic ideology in a simple and vigorous prose.

Trained in positivism, his own spirit opposes it with indefatigable courage. But the positivistic approach, refuted a hundred times, persists. Hence, his view of life as a tragic thing, the rational in perpetual battle with instinct. Metaphysical realities are beyond the scope of

the intellect. On the other hand they are within easy reach of emotion, of the feeling of grief. We yield to the temptation to reproduce here a text which appears to be a foretaste of Heidegger.

"There are times," says the Basque philosopher, "when without knowing why or whence, we become suddenly apprehensive . . . the feeling of our mortality . . . the soul is jolted by the wind from the flapping wings of a mysterious angel. . . . When I find myself preoccupied in the swirl of troubles or amidst the necessities of life, standing distracted at a party or in pleasant conversation, suddenly it seems that death is swishing above me. Not death, but something worse, a sense of annihilation, a supreme grief . . . that pulls us out of the superficial knowledge of things and unexpectedly carries us to a substantial knowledge of things. . . . The anguish of the spirit is the door to substantial truth."²

In Heideggerian terminology it would have to be said that sorrow in the presence of nothingness reveals to us our being, our true reality.

It is not surprising that the young Ortega would accuse the Basque of a romantic urge to Africanize Spain, or of "Moorish fanaticism arousing the mad passions of youth."³

Unamuno was a man of contradictions "who says one thing with his heart and the opposite with his mind and makes this battle his life."⁴ The drama of the modern soul shines forth in his spirit as it does in Ortega's. The scientific atmosphere, saturated with positivistic materialism, smothered "the simple faith of his youth." With his beliefs destroyed, he abominated that reason which was identified in his judgment with materialistic posi-

tivism. He established passion, the uncontrollable desire for immortality, as the object and point of departure for all philosophy. He endeavored to unite Schopenhauer's pessimism with Kierkegaard's existentialism. "Let us reflect now," he says, "on this strong suspicion that the eagerness to avoid death, the hunger for personal immortality . . . is the affective base of all knowledge and the intimate point of personal departure for all human philosophy. . . . And that the personal and affective point of departure of all philosophy and of all religion is the tragic feeling of life."⁶

And to anyone who objects that it is annoying and useless to discuss matters which weaken the will and cause much waste of time, he replies that life has no meaning, "nor is it possible to work at something serious and lasting," as long as no light is cast on these decisive questions.

Notwithstanding such accentuated temperamental divergencies, Unamuno's and Ortega's ideological identity of central subject matter is surprising.

For the Basque, reason is based on the irrational, is the enemy of life and essentially skeptical.⁶ A discouraging and destructive faculty, its critical analysis pulverizes all that falls beneath its ruthless sledge hammer. Inevitably reason leads to relativism, to absolute skepticism.⁷

These ideas are familiar to the philosopher of Madrid. In his essay entitled "Ni Vitalismo ni racionalismo," he affirms that "reasoning is no more than a combination of unreasonable views."⁸ An abyss of irrationality is hidden in reason itself.⁹ In Ortega's opinion rational reflection is utopian and unhistorical, the slave of vitality.

For the Basque philosopher, knowledge is bound to the

necessity of living, to the search for sustenance.¹⁰ "Beings," he says, "which seem endowed with perception perceive in order to live, and only to the degree which they need it to live do they perceive."¹¹ All knowledge is vitally pragmatic. The need to know in order to be able to continue living is inescapable.

If these ideas were not expressed before Ortega's time, it might be said that they are an echo of Ortegian formulas which attribute a vital function to thought as something subordinated to action, to biological utility. Ortega also recognizes that we think in order to survive.¹²

But the Basque continues by stating that the instinct of self-preservation, the necessity of living, creates for us reality, our world.¹³ Reality in itself is declared unknowable. By fantasy the human being constructs its subjective worlds. Thus the instinct of self-preservation creates the ideal world. Love produces the world of the beautiful.¹⁴ Unamuno, then, rejects an objective reality independent of consciousness. His sympathy for idealism is frank and open.¹⁵ The will fashions a world for us. In this regard also the similarity between the two Spanish writers is evident. Recall the Ortegian theories expressed in *Ideas y creencias*.

Unamuno exhorts us to distrust art and science.¹⁶ These cannot satisfy man; they cannot fulfill his affective and volitional needs.¹⁷ Ortega defends similar ideas. Scientific truth, attentive to the immediate, confined to intermediate subjects of a secondary category, leaves unanswered the final and essential questions. The sciences, both of nature and of spirit, have, in Ortega's opinion, failed and are incapable of solving the enigma of man. The Sage of the Escorial has no confidence in science and

has no hope for a definitive solution from it. On the contrary he boasts that his whole work is a crusade against the divinization of the intellect, against beatification of culture. Unamuno is the same. To develop a culture, to achieve the good, the true, and the beautiful for their own sake is not, in his eyes, a task which makes life legitimate.¹⁸

Likewise in the problem of God, these two philosophers follow an essentially parallel course. Ortegian pantheism is not very different from that professed by Unamuno. For Unamuno, God is the conscience of the universe, the personalization, individualization of all things.¹⁹ It is true, however, that Ortega has not adopted Schopenhauer's pessimism.

These facts teach a stern lesson. Unamuno and Ortega, whose fame has broken through the frontiers of language, agree in affirming the failure of modern culture as the goal of existence and the justification of life. Nevertheless, neither of the two has known how to harmonize reason and life in a higher balance. The Basque, with a spirit as rough and unpolished as the Cantabrian cliffs, spurned intelligence and in his shipwreck clung to an irrational and absurd feeling. Circumspect and aloof, more attentive to formality, Ortega has tried to hide the secret crisis of his spirit from our eyes. With the aid of a magic style he leads us astray with flowers, metaphors, and a skilful mental legerdemain. But finally the truth has its way. The skeptic throws off the mask. The secret intention of justifying atheism pervades his whole work. His failure is fundamental. Unamuno's tragedy throws a sinister light on Ortega's.

V

The True Solution

The Fiasco of Idealism

CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT PRESENTS ITSELF ON THE SCENE as an excessive and violent reaction against the three-hundred-year dictatorship of rationalism. Reason, eulogized by the rationalists as the final arbiter in the whole compass of knowledge, is seen now as the slave of life and the docile instrument of its immediate needs. Present-day philosophy has bestowed on human life the regal diadem which reason wore long ago.

Alert for the countersign, Ortega's thought faithfully mirrors the features of the times. In his writings reason and life carry on a fierce battle. But Ortega, faithful to the commands of the era, sides with the vitalists. The consequences, as we have shown, could not be more disastrous.

Like rationalism, contemporary philosophy represents an extreme and unilateral solution. It lacks moderation and impartiality. The former divinized reason; the latter, life. Modern thought has been shown incapable of

completing the arduous task of reconciling the senses and the intellect in their proper hierarchical balance. The hour has come to conquer Kant thoroughly and sincerely, scrupulously to reconsider his works which are saturated with errors but cannot be ignored. While his system has been liquidated, the Kantian spirit survives even in the cultural ideology of our time. His influence fills the atmosphere. Neither Bergson nor Scheler nor Heidegger—the peaks of current thought—escape it.

Between speculative and practical reason Kant opened an abyss. Reason was disconnected from life. The consequences could not be more regrettable. In the theoretical order, the *Critique of Pure Reason* contained the germ of relativistic positivism, pragmatism, and the skeptical viewpoint of our day. The currents of modern philosophy, having drunk their principles at the Kantian spring, have evolved in opposing and varying directions. Ortega shows this clearly. "This definitive opinion," he says, "according to which the content of every concept is always an aspect of life, the possible action or possible suffering of a man, has not till now, as far as I know, been defended by anyone; but it is, in my opinion, the unfailing term of the philosophical process initiated by Kant."¹ Clearly, vitalistic pragmatism, to which Ortega alludes, is for him the logical consequence of Kantianism.

But let us hear a still more explicit testimony. With his somewhat unpolished frankness Unamuno, speaking of reason divorced from life, says of rationalism: "Absolute relativism, which is neither more nor less than skepticism in the most modern meaning of this appellation, is the supreme triumph of the reasoning intellect."² For its part the *Critique of Practical Reason* contains the

germ of ethical irrationalism, which is held in favor today.

Nevertheless, it should not be believed that we fail to recognize, nor that we minimize the just merits which modern thought deserves. Indefatigably curious, it has opened new routes and explored unknown regions. With patient labor and tenacious observation it has accumulated incalculable treasures of positive data. Psychology has been enriched with the great fortune bequeathed by experimental and comparative psychology, character psychology, psychology of the masses and nations, psychology of living, and by psychiatry. Cosmology has widened its horizons due to the new investigations. Criteriology has been established as an independent discipline. New philosophical sciences have arisen: esthetics, sociology, the philosophy of religion, the philosophy of history, economics, and political science. The philosophy of history is but of yesterday, yet it already shows promise of golden fruit. It would be impossible even to hint at the richness of observations, shrewd analyses, valuable investigations of new problems achieved by modern research. Some notion can be had of all this by considering the imposing progress of the natural sciences.

Such rigorous labor has been, nevertheless, more of an analytic nature than synthetic. Great systematic constructions are the exception. Treasures of truth surround modern philosophy. But they are fragmentary and mutilated piecework. Basically, modern thought does not seem free from grave and extreme errors. It has denied being. Attentive only to the phenomenological and relative, it has obstructed the approach to objective reality. It has forgotten God. It has divinized first science, then life. It has made a strange deity of man, an absolute being but

temporal and finite, who knows not whence he comes, nor where he is going. To him the meaning of the universe and of life is an enigma. Owner of a marvelous civilization, he was never more unhappy, more a victim of grief, disgust, and inextinguishable hates.

With Heidegger and Ortega this modern enigmatic being casts itself into the arms of nothingness. Modern philosophy culminates in intellectual skepticism, in voluntaristic nihilism. Heidegger and Ortega are typical representatives of Kantianism in disintegration. They have carried Kant's principles to their final consequences.

The Rationalistic Thesis

Because of its false compass, the modern mind lies beached on the tragic reef of skeptical relativism. It is necessary to correct the sea charts, to revise thoroughly present methods. The divorce of reason from life and the excessive evaluation of the latter have brought on the present evils. The smashed equilibrium must be repaired. The intellect and the senses, reason and life must be again harmonized in hierarchical collaboration. Unamuno is not far from the truth when he asserts that "the tragic history of human thought is but the battle between reason and life."⁸

Reason is not the infallible arbiter as rationalism dreamed, nor is it a slave of vitality as today's philosophy of life pretends. Rationalism and existential vitalism are disproportionate solutions, one-sided and tainted by radicalism. Against rationalism it must be affirmed that reason cannot comprehend everything. The scope of being

conceals mysteries beyond the range of reason's weak wings. There are realities which escape its notice, but this does not prevent them from existing. Of the subjective spirit in which the cosmos is mirrored, we have only a poor, imperfect, and abstract knowledge.

The origin of evil, its triumph over the good on many occasions, the constant struggle which flesh and spirit wage in every man are chasms which the weak light of reason scarcely illuminates. On wings of analogy and abstraction the intelligence mounts to God. Nevertheless, such knowledge is analogical and imperfect, although true. The essence and nature of the divinity, its mysterious life wrapped in an impenetrable light beyond the frontiers of time, obfuscates and blinds the human intellect in such a way that it cannot have even a conjecture about such sublime secrets. Wisdom marvels at a fragment of weed. The researcher admires through the microscope the miracle that is a cell. In spite of our pride it is necessary to confess that we are surrounded by mysteries, realities of whose inner nature we are ignorant.

That science will discover many truths no one doubts, but there are heights beyond which not even metaphysics with its light wings will ever be able to pass. Intelligence is the jewel of the universe. But it should not be forgotten that its light clarifies but a small portion of the immensity of the real. The elegant skepticism of our day is in part the reaction of the mind disillusioned by the naïve rationalistic optimism. Although it may lead to bitterness, we must confess that in the subtle world of philosophical thought we know with certainty only a restricted number of truths. Of much we doubt, and we are ignorant of a considerable majority.

To know is to make oneself the object by mental assimilation. In the act of knowing, being is grasped in its more generic and extensive intelligible aspects. Intellectual knowledge is not exhaustive, but abstract and meager. The act of knowledge does not empty the intelligibility of an object. It perceives only one aspect, true of course, but fragmentary. Only after successive intellectual contacts do we form a more perfect idea of the object, yet our knowledge never comes to comprehend the object integrally in its rich and complex individuality. Still, it should be noted that each act of cognition produces a replica of one aspect of the thing known. This aspect is true. Each act of knowing reaches being, genuine reality.

Thus, truth is absolute insofar as it implies identity between the intellectual act and the real aspect of a being. For either the identity is had or it is not had. The act is conformed or it is not conformed to a particular aspect of the being, that is, to its formal object; there is no middle ground. If we now consider the act of knowledge, we notice that in the case of the same object, the wise man's act of cognition, for example, is richer and more perfect than that of an ignorant person. A mathematician's cognition at one time can be more perfect than some other act of his regarding the same problem, because of his greater attention and the more certain motives perceived with greater clarity in one act than in another. With regard to the object, it is evident that only one aspect of it is known by a single cognition. By multiplying the acts of cognition, the knowledge increases, is enriched. In these cases the truth admits of grades; it is relative. It is in proportion to the sharpness of the talent,

to the intensity, attention, and multiplicity of cognitional acts.

In brief, truth, considered formally as an identity between a cognoscitive act and its object, is absolute. Materially and subjectively considered, that is, attending to the intensity and extension with which the object is known and to the intellect which knows, it admits degrees, it is relative.

According to this, knowledge, through which is established the existence of an uncaused Being, source of all that exists, implies a metaphysical truth universal and necessary, since it is based on the essences of things. But the divine reality infinitely exceeds the act of cognition. Truth, while immutable and permanent, is imperfect, abstract, meager. The science of God has an infinite task set before itself. Likewise metaphysical, though on a lower level, is the truth which postulates the existence of a free and spiritual principle in man. This does not deny that our knowledge of the soul offers an unlimited field to psychology for fruitful study. The same can be said about those grand subjects of human thought which like rich mines await the boldness and perseverance of the researcher and the philosopher.

The metaphysical validity of a truth does not imply, as many believe, its fossilization and stagnation. Truth, in the sense already described, is dynamic and progressive. It contains an insurmountable tendency to perfect identity with its object. Partial truths are absorbed and integrated into the architecture of knowledge. The truth of yesterday continues today, but clarified by the perspective of newly discovered truths. The known truth is a new beacon which illuminates the darkness of the unknown.

It is one more step in the bold ascent. Metaphysical principles based on acquired knowledge possess an inexhaustible fecundity. Far from being an obstacle, they are the inescapable points of reference in the quest for realities yet unknown. Metaphysics is the compass of philosophy.

From this short analysis it follows that the correct attitude toward reality is humility, respect for facts. It is natural, therefore, that this virtue generally accompanies and distinguishes the truly learned man. Reality must be respected as it is, with neither pride nor pessimism. We must nobly admit that we neither know everything nor know nothing, even though this confession hurts our arrogance.

Rationalism, on the contrary, implies a narrow and agnostic position. Anything beyond the ken of reason is simply declared nonexistent. Rationalism is intransigent and aprioristic.

Against idealistic rationalism we must equally argue that the intellect does not create its object by its immanent, subjective, a priori play of the categories. Such doctrine, as the history of philosophy victoriously proves, is one-hundred per cent idealistic. It leads to relativism, to the skeptical negation of all certainty. Moreover, it is intrinsically false. With clear evidence, our consciousness attests that knowledge does not terminate in our own internal psychical act but in a reality outside our mind. We know external objects and not our conscious act as such. The object of our thought is not thought but being. Therefore, being determines the knowledge and not vice versa. It is useless to seek to weaken this undeniable fact by calling it a transcendental illusion. Its evidence is

above all criticism. If anyone denies such primary data, or falsely interprets it, what truth will he not doubt? Moreover, if that which we call things is a mere design of the subjective activity, why are the internal psychical acts not also projected to the exterior?

On the other hand, idealism admits that thought is simple. How is it possible that a simple thing is perceived by itself as extended and corporeal? Idealism either goes along with Spinoza's pantheism, in which the absolute is manifested simultaneously under the forms of idea and extension, or it asserts with Fichte that the objectivity obeys practical motives. Consciousness requires that being be objective. The ultimate reason is a mystery for Fichte.

If we consult history, we notice that idealism was born from a false problem. Idealism arose on the modern European horizon as a result of the erroneous statement of the anthropological problem in Descartes. Starting from the false premise of the *Cogito*, Descartes conceived the human soul as a spirit enfleshed in the body, with which it is unable to exchange any causal influence. This opinion arises from the notion that the spiritual and in-extensive can neither actuate nor be actuated by the material and corporeal. Descartes justified the objective world by resorting to the wisdom and veracity of God. In this way he avoided idealism, but with little logic. Nevertheless, Descartes' counterfeit problem has persisted. Occasionalism, ontologism, and pre-established harmony aspired to solve it, but beginning from false premises they arrived at inadmissible conclusions.

We must return to the point of departure. The initial error consisted in beginning from the false premise of

Cogito, in supposing in man two principles of activity distinct from one another: on the one hand, the spiritual soul which thinks and feels; on the other, the merely automaton body.

Such a doctrine is indefensible. Actually, it is the animated organ that feels. The vegetive-sensitive actions spring from the soul and the body as one indivisible principle. Sensations cannot proceed from the soul alone, nor from the body alone; but only from both, insofar as they constitute a human nature, a unique principle of activity. In the light of this brief analysis we are able to conclude that rationalistic idealism represents a unilateral, subjective, and exaggerated solution to the problem of knowledge. In the act of knowledge the intellect does not act alone; the imagination and feelings also collaborate. In their turn feeling and emotion accompany and intensify, giving warmth and volume to the act of cognition.

The Antithesis to Historicism

But against historicist relativism, the false champion of life, we must also defend the existence of truths free from the fluctuations of fashion, indifferent to the fickleness of opinion, superior to the vicissitudes of historical events. Such are the first principles of knowledge: the primary concepts which the intellect forms in making contact with the sensible order. They constitute the laws of intelligible being.

The foundation of all these is the principle of contradiction: "It is impossible that anything should be and not be at the same time." Wherever there has been a hu-

man mind, whether an Egyptian in the time of Pharaoh, or a Roman in the time of Caesar, or a scholastic contemporaneous with Aquinas, or a European of our own day, this principle has the same validity, because its eternal truth is not bound to time or space. Whoever denies it, affirms it. The skeptic who doubts it, in his very doubt supposes it and admits it. Really, he who doubts the validity of this principle, establishes it because he fears to commit error, and he fears to commit error because he at least implicitly admits that the true is not the same as the false. But in this reasoning the principle of contradiction is implicit, for the truth cannot be and not be at the same time.

The principle of contradiction is an analytic judgment; that is, its truth becomes evident by a mere analysis of its terms. Let us consider any being. That being, by the very fact that it exists, cannot simultaneously not exist. Its very existence excludes its simultaneous nonexistence. Now then, in assenting to the impossibility that a being may be and not be at the same time, we prescind absolutely from every concept of place and time. We abstract from every individual and concrete being. The truth of the analytical judgment is not restricted to a localized spot in time or space or to an historical era. It was valid for Aristotle as well as for the Middle Ages; it is valid now and will be in the future. It is not enclosed by a sensible being, but vaulting over the realm of the historical and the relative, it ascends to the immutable region of the essences of things, and there brings us to contemplate how the most simple concept of being excludes from itself the concept of not-being, as light excludes darkness.

The principle of sufficient reason, just as that of contradiction, pervades the whole dominion of being: "There is nothing without its sufficient reason," or in a positive form: "In so far as anything exists, it must have a sufficient reason for its existence." Let us see how it is reduced to, and is supported by, the principle of contradiction. That a being possesses sufficient reason means that it has something in virtue of which it is distinguished from nothingness and is opposed to nothingness, a reason because of which we are able to designate it as something real and not mere nothing. But if such a reason were not necessary in order that something might be in the category of being, then a being might be simultaneously something and nothing. Therefore, if the principle of sufficient reason is denied, that of contradiction must also be denied, and with it the possibility of all science, of all knowledge.

In the same way let us now analyze the principle of causality. It rests directly on that of sufficient reason, and ultimately on the principle of contradiction. It may be stated as: "Everything which begins to exist must have a cause." Let us notice the first term: every being which begins to exist, every contingent being, must have a sufficient reason for its existence, either in itself or in another being really distinct from it. The first explanation is absurd; the second remains. Now then, that being which is sufficient reason for the existence of this being has had a positive influence in its production, otherwise it would have no relation with it. The truth of this principle, as well as of the former, is superior to the relativity of historical eras, or to the cultural level of human societies.

On the rock foundation of these first principles traditional metaphysics is established. All the errors of philosophers in no way weaken any one of its truths. In the same way, the crimes which weigh on humanity are unavailing to tarnish the heroic feat of a mother who sacrifices herself for her son. The fact that there have been errors merely proves that the human intellect is limited, but it in no way proves that truth is impossible.

Let us now see, at least in a short synthesis, how traditional philosophy is organized into a solid unity on the living rock of these perennial truths. Based on first principles, logic investigates the laws of thought. Criteriology in its turn makes natural certitude, by means of reflection, philosophically acceptable. To attempt to demonstrate the validity of the intelligence for knowing reality is absurd and lacks meaning. The theory of knowledge is necessarily related to metaphysics, which studies being in its highest degree of abstraction and everything that is in relation to it. Metaphysics clarifies its nature and properties. It establishes the stable principles on which all science rests.

It is psychology's task to investigate the ultimate causes of living phenomena. Consequently, before all else it must define those phenomena, establish their nature and properties, trace down the remote source from which they spring. The psychological inquiry demonstrates the intimate nature of vital phenomena. A metaphysical principle serves as a guide in this adventure through the paths of life. This principle is: the activity of a being is related to its nature. No being can act above its nature. In other words, no one gives what he does not have—a formula which implies the principle of sufficient reason.

In this way, through the operations of a being we storm the intellectual abode where the essential nature of being is hidden. The thing's immanent and teleological vital operation reveals its interior principle to us. The simple and spiritual intellectual act takes us by the hand to the threshold of the soul, which is thereby shown to be both spiritual and simple. With the concept of a spiritual idea established, its necessary distinction from the product of the imagination is easily seen. Hence we conclude to the essential and specific difference which separates man from the brute. And we carefully avoid conferring on the African gorilla an intellectual faculty when in reality he only possesses a blind instinct.

Having demonstrated the spiritual nature of the will and the intellect, we conclude that the will is free, of course with human limitations. Its spirituality reveals another facet of the soul: its immortality. Once liberty is proved, psychological determinism must be rejected, including its Freudian and materialistic forms.

While psychology plunges into the world of consciousness and of life, cosmology inquires into the ultimate causes of the physical and inanimate things which surround us. Against idealists of every hue it demonstrates that extension, mass, and the properties of bodies are not a mere illusion of the senses, an objectivization of conscience, but essential properties of the things themselves. The marvelous world of reality is not a transcendental illusion but really possesses validity outside the mind.

Continuing our study we note that every being in the physical world seems encompassed by the co-ordinates of time and space. The correct appreciation of both is very important. A false notion of them has precipitated out-

standing minds into crass errors. Kant, Bergson, Heidegger, offer eloquent examples.

Physical bodies manifest powers of active causality, influencing one another according to definite and stable laws. Through observation, these laws are inductively established. This is the scope of the natural sciences: physics, chemistry, biology, and so forth. In the final analysis laws of nature present themselves as manifestations of the eternal, divine law which infuses into each being along with its nature a determined and stable tendency toward activity, as the archer impels the arrow. Hence we deduce that the author of the physical laws, being God, can impede or change the activity of a body. This is the case in a miracle. God, the lawgiver of nature, can establish a law, then revoke it in certain circumstances according to His higher designs. By observing the innumerable and marvelous phenomena of the physical world, we have an *a posteriori* demonstration of that same finality of nature which metaphysics proves *a priori*. Faced with a world ruled by admirable laws, we must admit an ordaining and intelligent principle.

The Antithesis to Historicism (continued)

The ethical world is supported by two pillars: right and duty. The object of morality is the human act, deliberate and free. In our inquiry here we postulate two facts: the existence of God and human liberty.

First of all, it is necessary to find the norm which makes a free act good or evil. Gazing at the universe, we note that all beings are ruled by certain laws which direct each

being to the particular end demanded by its nature. Irrational beings are enchained by inexorable physical laws. That eternal law, in so far as it is manifested in time to human reason, constitutes the natural law. Man observes that there are things which harmonize with their integral nature (rational-corporeal), and things which diverge from it. God, the author of nature, implants His own irrevocable will in man by the light of human intelligence. The rational being is not integrated into the cosmic symphony of divine order by an inescapable physical coercion; rather he carries in his hands the key to his own destiny, the frightening power of altering the harmony of creation. He must tend toward his end by his own free decision.

Man is linked to the cosmic order by the subtle but inescapable bond of the moral law. The end and happiness of the human being depends upon his respect for that ethical order prescribed by God and manifested by man's rational conscience. Hence we logically deduce that neither utilitarianism, nor hedonism, nor Kantian autonomy can be admitted as objective norms of morality.

We have seen that man is obliged to tend toward his ultimate end by his free and conscious observance of that moral order which his nature postulates. But if the human being is obliged to tend toward his end freely, he has for that very reason an inviolable right that no one impede him from such a tendency. Therefore, from the absolute necessity which directs man to tend toward his end through actions and things necessarily related to him, arise man's essential rights, the source of every right, and the basis of the juridical order. This means: the right to

one's own life, the right to follow one's own conscience, the right to develop integrally one's own faculties and to choose a profession. From the right to life follows the right to property and association.

From the above we deduce that duty is strictly personal, whereas right concerns man as a member of society. In brief, duty is the moral law insofar as it binds the human will to the divine; right is that same law in so far as it protects the essential liberty of man. Ontologically speaking, duty is prior to right.

If we take a bird's-eye view of the ethical panorama, we note that a right is a moral bond directed to insuring that individuals, as members of a community, co-operate for the common good and participate in their turn in the benefits which society provides.

Up to now we have analyzed duty and right, the axis of ethics. Its basic principles have been established. In special ethics the above norms are applied to the different problems which varied and complex human activity entails both in the individual and in society.

The object of natural theology is God. Since God, however, has no causes either proximate or ultimate, natural theology investigates in the light of human intelligence the ontological reason of a divine Being. Experience shows us active beings endowed with causality, contingent, differing among themselves by degrees of perfection. Building on the principles of causality and sufficient reason, we conclude to the existence of a first principle of movement (prime mover) and to an uncaused cause, an absolute Being which unites in itself all those perfections which sparkle forth in other beings. The heavens sing out the glory of God. The most meta-

physical approach is akin to poetry. The beauty of the visible world is a preview of the divine beauty. It is the footprint of God, as the great mystic, St. John of the Cross, has sung.

Having established the existence of God, we attempt to penetrate, as far as is given to our weak reason, into the divine Being by means of an analysis of the concept of uncaused Being (*ens a se*). From it we deduce that God is subsistent Being, infinite, simple, unique, immutable, eternal, everywhere. It is true knowledge, though analogical, abstract, and obscure. Finally, we consider the so-called relative attributes of God: knowledge, will, and power.

With this we have briefly surveyed the panorama of philosophy. God, the human being in his complex profundity, the physical world with its marvelous hierarchical kingdoms—everything has been evident, to the extent allowed the limited light of human intelligence.

Such a philosophical investigation, by revealing the universe in its immense perspectives, not only illuminates and strengthens the intelligence, but also offers to the will a program which clarifies the ways of action. Traditional philosophy marvelously achieves the union of the intellect and life.

The historicist thesis that every truth is relative to the individual and to the era is inadmissible because of the grave consequences to which it leads: absolute relativism, theoretical and practical skepticism. Our analysis of the fundamental laws of being has demonstrated the existence of necessary and universally valid truths. Relativistic historicism is therefore also false. What can existential historicism present in opposition to these truths? It will say that the intellect cannot know reality, that the

real is in itself an insoluble enigma. . . . These are Kantian and positivistic affirmations which offer no decisive argument in defense of such extreme agnosticism. This attitude is openly skeptical, for it makes all genuine cultural and scientific labor impossible.

Actually, if we are fatally enchained in the lugubrious cave of subjective immanence, if we are unable to break through the circle of our own consciousness, what meaning has science and philosophy? Why live deceived by fanciful appearances if truth is impossible? Granting these principles, social and domestic human life disintegrates and is destroyed. Truth and justice, pillars of all social order, lack foundation and justification in a world in which everything is relative and historical, in which the individual has no more law than the inconstant caprice of opinion and the commands of *fad*. Authority loses all force. Moral, social, and religious values are reduced to beautiful empty formulas. Historicism leads to chaos. It is a suicidal theory.

Historical relativism, however, boasts of being philosophy's last word, the most precious acquisition of modern thought. The truth is more modest and circumspect. If we analyze the structure of mathematical, physical, and chemical sciences, we find in all a system of truths based on a few axioms or fundamental principles. The same is noted in the traditional philosophical sciences. Absolute relativity would lead science into an infinite series, to the negation of the very concept of science. Nevertheless, it would be unjust to disregard the aspect of existential historicism which is true. All knowledge, even universal and necessary, does in fact originate in concrete experience. Truth is not the product of pure reason after the manner of the idealists.

The New Synthesis

It is clear beyond doubt that the rationalistic method, no less than the historico-existential method, has shown itself inept to solve the centuries-old dispute between reason and life. Fragmentary and extreme, the one sacrifices life to reason; the other, the intellect to vitality. We have seen how this internal rending of man has deeply reverberated, opening the door to grave errors.

We have observed the failure of Cartesianism and Kantianism. We now are witnesses of modern philosophy's bankruptcy. This is not a gratuitous supposition, but a conclusion arrived at from an impartial analysis of history. Besides, Ortega himself recognizes that idealistic rationalism no longer has anything to say. "Is it not obvious to suspect," he asks, "that the current crisis proceeds from the new position adopted in 1600, that the modern position has exhausted all its possibilities, has arrived at its furthest limits, and therefore has discovered its own limitation, its contradictions, its insufficiency?"⁴

On the other hand, Ortega asserts that his theory of vital reason is "the unfailing term of the philosophical process which was begun by Kant."⁵ What Ortega does not wish to see is that both he and Heidegger, in carrying the postulates of Kantian idealism to their ultimate consequences, have foundered into theoretical skepticism and voluntaristic nihilism. Observing the decline of idealistic rationalism, Ortega aspired to save himself on the fragile plank of historicist vitalism. Vain desire! As we have seen, this theory too relapsed into idealism.

Both the phenomenological movement and the philosophy of values, two other great currents of contemporary

thought, are also flowing into idealism, despite their laudable efforts to conquer it. Husserl,⁶ Scheler,⁷ and N. Hartmann fail to free themselves from their own inner selves; they disregard objective and external being.

The time is ripe for a new philosophical era. An age of integral thought, free from idealistic fogs, from narrow and unilateral relativisms, an age that would re-establish the broken equilibrium of reason and life in its pristine harmony of hierarchical collaboration. It is necessary to affirm an intelligence rooted in life, in the real. The pure intellect which extracts the universe from its own heart is absurd. It is necessary to assert an intelligence which through the concrete data contributed by the senses reaches objective and real, though abstract, being. Feeling and emotion bolster and accompany knowledge. The will collaborates. But it cannot be admitted that feeling and emotion, or the emotional faculties place us in contact with the transcendental, as Bergson and Heidegger thought. It would be useless to repeat the reason adduced above.

In this way, far from being opposed by an implacable enemy, the senses present the intelligence with sensible and concrete data through which the intelligence grasps the intelligible being of things. Metaphysical knowledge is possible. Ethics recaptures its ontological character despoiled by Kant. The existence of God, the immortality of the soul, liberty—all recover their lost membership in the kingdom of reason. They are demonstrable by the light of intellect.

With its cupboard open, where abound its treasures and precious jewels, modern philosophy awaits some outstanding thinker who will fashion an integral synthesis

of everything worth while which it has been able to store up during the centuries of hard labor. Human thought possesses two great philosophical syntheses. In the fourth century B.C. Aristotle, the clearest mind that has existed, gathered all the knowledge accumulated by the Greek genius into a system whose main outlines still challenge time. Thomas Aquinas, sixteen centuries later, incorporated into Aristotelian thought the whole wisdom of his age. Arabs and Scholastics, Aristotelian and Neoplatonic commentators, Fathers of the Church and classical humanists, contributed their wealth independently of place of origin. All truth is merged in Aquinas' crucible, and with this truth the gothic filigree of his golden *Summa* is wrought.

The centuries have passed. Descartes and Kant, suspicious and haughty, retreated into themselves as introverts. Alert to criticize and tear down, they were not concerned with incorporating into their thought the accumulated wisdom of previous humanity. Their work, of a negative character, betrays in our day the typical symptoms of decadence. Idealism has entered a phase of internal disintegration. Its principles, carried out to their final consequences, have exhausted their potentialities. The hour is propitious for a new synthesis. The twentieth century is waiting for that outstanding thinker who will unify all that has value in ancient wisdom, in medieval science, and in modern speculation.

Facts convince us, however, that that great synthesis is only possible by grafting the fruitful sprouts of modern culture on the age-old trunk of traditional philosophy.

VI

Fichtean Actualism

The Ego Program

IN THE FIRST PART OF THIS WORK WE ESTABLISHED THAT for Ortega the ego is not a substantial, ontological reality; rather it is pure activity, a job, a design of existence, a task, drama. . . . Moreover, that ego is formed by itself in reaction to the environment; it has no other end than itself, and it is open to all possibilities.¹

Indisputably Fichtean in character, the actualist theory originally proceeded from Locke, Hume, and Kant. Yet its germ is found even in Cartesianism.

Locke did not directly deny the substantiality of the ego. But in his opinion we are not able to know anything about it. His position is agnostic. Hume took another step and defined the soul as a bundle or collection of distinct perceptions in perpetual flow and movement. He rejected the substantiality of the soul and of the ego. In its place he established the three laws of associationism—ideas group themselves according to the laws of similarity, contiguity, and cause. In his turn, Kant established

the triple ego. First, the phenomenal or empiric: the series of cognoscitive and appetitive psychical acts. Second, the transcendental: identity of the conscience, or synthetic unity of aperception by which we attribute our acts to the ego. Finally, the transcendent or noumenal self. The ego is reduced to the sum of the acts. Descartes opened the door to these ideas by considering thought as the essence of the spirit, a mere *res cogitans*.

Nevertheless, Fichte's influence is predominant and decisive. From him Ortega takes the concept of the ego as a job, pure activity, design of existence. He also inherits from Fichte the ego which is created by itself with no other end than itself and open to all possibilities.

A closer examination of the Ortegian writings makes us suspect a double Fichtean influence. Before 1929 the first was already manifested in his youthful writings.² Ortega clearly professes psychological actualism in the *Espectador*, in Volumes I and V.³ But it is only after 1929 that Fichte's theories gain importance and preponderance.⁴

If we seriously analyze the essay entitled "Filosofía pura," we find phrasings of undeniably Heideggerian stamp. For example: "I think," says Ortega in this essay, "because something near by oppresses and preoccupies me, because in existing I do not exist alone but am something which is concerned with other things, willingly or not."⁵

As far as the data at our disposal permits us to judge, it might be said that the Fichtean character of this second period must be attributed to the evident influence of the Heideggerian ideology. Ortega's writings and courses still unedited prevent us from formulating a definitive

judgment in this matter. Whether immediately or through Heidegger, Fichte's inspiration is undeniable in Ortega's more recent writings.

Here are some proofs. Fichte said, "I am not a being already fashioned, but I am that which I do to myself; I am an event directed toward a task; I am a particularized actuation."⁶ Let us hear Ortega: for him life does not consist in something already made, but "in something which has to be made by itself; which is not, then, a thing, but an absolute and problematical task."⁷ It would be useless to multiply the citations.⁸

For Fichte the fundamental duty of a spiritual being is "a self-fashioning."⁹ From this it follows that the ego is its own cause; its activity does not admit any other end than itself; its destiny is to tend toward the absolute. These are ideas we have found in Ortega and already explained in their proper place.¹⁰

The Absurdity of Actualism

Ortega's actualism presupposes, first of all, idealistic subjectivism. Nevertheless, it will not be useless to suggest a few critical observations.

Ortega defends a psychology without a substantial soul. This position is untenable. Actually, the act of consciousness cannot arise from nothing. Nor did the previous act produce it, for dreams and other agents interrupt the flow of consciousness. Moreover, it is contrary to the facts that each act of self-awareness inherits the whole treasure of past experience at the disappearance of the previous act. In each act we know one single determined object.

The contents of other acts remain beyond the realm of conscience. Nor is it of any value to affirm with Wundt that one act changes into another. For if we abide by internal experience, each act is expressed as really distinct from the others. Let us note for a moment our own internal experience. We clearly perceive our ego as the identical subject of all psychical acts past and present. Something remains the same through the changes and vicissitudes of life. This fact is inexplicable in the actualist hypothesis. On the contrary, it is easily explained by admitting a substantial principle, a soul, which perdures in the midst of historical events.

Let us analyze a judgment. It consists of a subject, a predicate, and an affirmation or negation. That which judges must be the same as that which knows the subject and predicate. In the actualist theory, judgment and, even more so, reasoning are impossible. Really, one act would know the subject, another the predicate, and the third would render the verdict. But why insist? In the actualist hypothesis memory and moral responsibility are inexplicable. Remorse is absurd, impossible.

In brief, the psychical act is a fact, a contingent fact. But in so far as it begins to exist, it must have a cause. It does not have this cause in itself, for thus the psychical act would simultaneously be the producer and the produced, the effect and the cause. In other words, the non-existent would produce something. This is patently absurd. Therefore, if it does not have the cause of its existence in itself, it must have it in some other being. This is the substantial soul. As is seen, actualism cannot stand up to a serious analysis.

How does Ortega answer this? It must be admitted

that he avoids the problem. At various times in his writings he nibbles at the question, as the above explanation has already shown. But he never sincerely faces the problem. Thus on one occasion, after skirting the subject he says: "I do not discuss this fully because it would tend to launch me on a philosophical voyage."¹¹ But it should not be believed that Ortega's insight has not perceived the gravity of the question. He realizes that behind it is hidden "a tremendous problem."¹² Yet a serious discussion on so important a subject would carry him too far! Let us recall that Ortega fears nothing so much as irrevocable convictions which truth imposes once it is discovered. Ortega is an actualist, not by intellectual conviction, but because it is the fact.

The Crisis of Pseudo Humanism

The outline of man sketched by Ortega is that of an absolute being endowed with complete autonomy and open to all potentialities. It knows no other end except itself. Its being is its own creation. Culture, with its plurality of interior worlds—science, art, religion—is produced by man's activity. The Ortegian man is a caricature of God.

The anthropocentric process, initiated with the Reformation, ripened in illuminism, and finding in Kant a remarkable systematizer, reached its zenith in our day. The crisis of pseudo humanism is entering its last phase. Divinized man is annihilated by himself in virtue of his adopted principles of disintegration. The collectivist pseudo humanism of Marx immolates the individual on the altars of the community. The individualist pseudo

humanism of Nietzsche sacrifices him to the superman. The modern political myths enslave the person to the state, to the national blood, and to the race. Ortega, following Heidegger, condemns man to intellectual skepticism, to nihilism of action. The failure of pseudo humanism, which in our day adopts the name of "transcendental humanism," could not be more obvious in the historical panorama.¹⁸ Nevertheless, let us briefly consider it in the light of our principles.

Contrary to what this system holds, man is not an absolute and independent being who is sufficient in himself. He is not absolute because, whether he wishes it or not, he is the handiwork of God, formed in His image and likeness, finite and contingent. Far from finding his end and sufficiency in himself, the human being needs other human beings. He is born an infant, weak and poor; he develops supported by society, at whose expense his faculties mature. His spirit is nourished from the treasury of human experience accumulated in long centuries of history. Yet natural society does not satisfy the ambitions and restlessness of man. He is a citizen of two worlds, developing and satisfying his natural tendencies in the political community, while by religion he unites himself with God through bonds of charity. Absolute autonomy is a myth to intoxicate the masses. Bound to God by the natural law written in the depths of his being and by the positive law linked to legitimately constituted political authority, man realizes and develops his faculties, attains his end. In this his true grandeur is founded, his specific perfection. Man is free, but within the orbit marked off by his rational and sensible nature. If this barrier is crossed, he is destroyed, annihilated. Abandoning himself

to his whims he becomes the easy prey of those unchained instincts which darken his intellect and lead to all possible errors both theoretical and practical. Man cannot suffice for himself, he cannot find his ultimate end in himself. Metaphysically poor and indigent, only in God does he find fulness and gratification for his enslaving desire for happiness.

VII

Immoralism

The Vital Norm

THE ORTEGAN ETHICAL PANORAMA IS DESOLATE AND BITTER. As in the metaphysical sphere, so also in the moral field he aspires to grant indisputable hegemony to life. Influenced by Nietzsche, he endeavors to achieve a complete transformation of values.

For the morality which is based on reason and imposes inflexible norms he finds no other name than depravity. In his eyes, life is its own ethics. Illusion is more fruitful than duty. The new norm of morality eulogized by Ortega consists in "a religious docility to life," in preferring the corruptible to the immutable, the tremulous inconsistency of existence to a schematic and bloodless eternity. Such a theory is entirely immoral. To assert that life is ethical in itself is to veil serious errors with a vague phrase.

Ortega opposes reason to life in such a manner that the term "life" applied to man refers to his emotional and sensible faculties. According to this, what does it mean to say that the instinctive and sensible is ethical in itself? Or that its acts are outside the moral dominion,

or that they possess their own norms? The first is false because, being free, man can and should subject his inferior and instinctive faculties to the moral norm which his reason suggests. The second is immoralism, pagan justification for the depraved instincts of man. The norm of morality cannot depend on the whims of instinct nor on the fickleness of sentiment. Such a criterion would be relativistic and subjective.

If we study the facts faithfully and without prejudice, we discover that there are actions which by their very nature and independently of any law and human convention are decent or perverse—to love one's native land, to honor parents, to murder the innocent, to be unfaithful to contracts. . . . If we now analyze why some actions are in themselves good and others evil, we discover that for an action to be intrinsically moral or immoral, decent or perverse, it is enough that it be directed or not to the adequate and integral end of human nature. Really, good is that which is in harmony with something, that which is conformed to its inclination or natural capacity. Therefore, for man, that will be good which is in harmony with and conformed to his rational-sensible nature, integrally considered. To honor God, one's own parents, fatherland, are things congenial to man's nature, are things good in themselves. On the contrary, to default from a contract, or to deprive an innocent person of his life is dishonest in itself and contrary to rational nature, for the very light of reason clearly suggests to man not to do to another the evil which he does not wish done to himself.

Consequently there exists in man an immanent, universal, and objective norm of morality: human nature integrally considered. And we say "integrally considered"

in order to emphasize the essential hierarchy of goods. A delectable object which incites the sensibility is a good, but only a partial, sensible good, which satisfies and is conformed to only part of man and that part certainly of the inferior order. A thing good in itself, on the contrary, is ordered to the whole man. It is a good of higher quality, to which in case of conflict the delectable sensible good should be subordinated. Any rational being who alters this ontological hierarchy of goods cultivates his own ruin. He will never be able to brand into himself the characteristics of a human personality.

It should be noted that in our analysis the emotional and sentimental occupies the place to which it is suited. The morality of an act does not depend on one's sentimental reaction or instinctive tendencies. With this it is clear that we do not deny the prevailing, and at times decisive, role of emotion in our life; we only wish to state clearly that the morality of an act is indifferent to the fluctuations of feeling, to the inconstant tide of the affections. Things are good or evil, decent or indecent, not because they please or delight, but in so far as they agree with or distort integral human nature.

In the light of these principles, Ortéga's pretensions to erect as the norm of morality a religious docility to life are seen to be unacceptable, false, and immoral. Unacceptable, because they defend a subjective relativistic criterion, attentive only to the command of fashion and leading finally to moral skepticism. False, because the norm of morality is not a matter of emotional reactions, nor of vital impulses blind and confused. Immoral, because they open the door to wantonness and licentiousness. An example of this is Ortega's justification of the

immoral acts of a great statesman; he gives free rein indiscriminately to noble and depraved tendencies of human nature under the futile pretext that life is ethical in itself.

Moreover, Ortega's ethical vitalism disregards human nature. Immorality must be restrained in the very heart of the individual. But this air-tight retreat is inaccessible to all external regulation. Still less does the autonomous and sanctionless norm, frivolous and conventional as it is, have any value. Ethics either plants its roots in religion or it is only a name. Without duty and sanction beyond the individual, morality is only a beautiful word.

The Anthropocentric Norm

We have seen that, when faced with the new barbarian invasion, the author of *Revolt of the Masses* temporarily abandoned his position of open vitalistic immorality. He recognized that the common man is primitive because he is not subject to norms and higher law. He admitted the urgency of respecting precepts which give consistency to life. Still more, he diagnosed a serious evil in the heart of European culture: immorality. But faithful to his superficial and antimetaphysical ways, he did not venture to look at the tragic problem face to face. Later, Ortega's ethical thought comes under the influence of Fichte and Heidegger, while holding itself fundamentally faithful to the vital immoralism of his earlier writings.

Sketching a synthesis, we discover a strange fact. Ortega condemns culturalism, which after displacing God endeavored to justify life with the deification of reason and its cultural creations. In its place he enthrones

life, existence worthy in itself and needing no extravitral content to assert itself. This first faith is slowly extinguished in his spirit. Finally, he recognizes that life has value as the achievement of one's ego. "Be yourself," he repeats with Pindar and Fichte. He proclaims that life is drama, inexorable mission, destiny. . . . He aspires, consciously or unconsciously, to endow existence with a valuable content, without abandoning his naturalistic attitude, without going beyond the boundaries of the purely human. He nourishes his secret intention, as did Heidegger, of formulating a philosophical justification for atheism. But his plans failed. The last stage of Ortega ideology is lost in the night of skeptical nihilism.

Life exacts from Ortega a motive which would make it at least tolerable if not worth while. "To live fully," he confesses, "we need something enchanting and perfect which completely fills the emptiness of our hearts."¹ But how justify life as a mission, if there is no one sending or being sent? How afford meaning and validity to a destiny which no one imposes and which is arbitrarily interpreted by restricting it to the sensible, temporal, and purely human, which rejects, without discussion, one whole portion (and that the most essential) of life—the religious and supernatural?

The diagnosis of Ortega's error, as well as that of our era, is pseudo humanism: the divinization of man, the conscious exclusion of God. It matters little whether reason or science or life is made divine; it is all the same. The effects are identical: immorality in ethics, chaos in metaphysics, the repudiation of supreme values, the embracing of the mutable and the ephemeral. The anthropocentric norm implies an essential inversion of values.

VIII

Theological Agnosticism

A PANTHEIST IN HIS YOUTH, ORTEGA, THE CULTURALIST spectator, years later beautifully discourses on and vigorously argues against agnosticism. This does not prevent him from formulating propositions regarding God which are of the brightest naturalistic color. With faith lost in God and in reason, he makes himself prophet of the new revelation, the disillusioned life. The pantheistic god of his youth disappears from the Ortegian horizon as skeptical darkness invades it totally. Faithful only to the inconsistency of his opinion, Ortega follows the ideological fluctuations of the age like a shadow even in this great subject.

He rejects religion in the name of clarity, since it attempts to explain life by means of mysteries—fundamentally insoluble problems which lead from obscurity to darkness. Mystery is, in his opinion, “the luxury of mental obscurity.”¹ If he were consistent, he would also have to renounce scientific and philosophical speculation. From his own lips we have heard that “the enigma of life

is insoluble," that reality is an undecipherable enigma. But it is useless to endeavor to exact precise logic from a philosopher for whom there is no other criterion of truth than the ebb and flow of philosophical currents.

From this absence of God all of Ortega's errors spring as from a fountain. Separated from the absolute Being, man is submerged in subjective immanence. Pride incites him to establish himself as God, autonomous and creative. Metaphysics yields to the enslaving supremacy of the sensible and instinctive. Morality, once split from religion, loses its force and degenerates into elegant conventionalism, behind which immorality is concealed.

Here is a revealing symptom! A remarkable essayist, Ortega y Gasset has launched into the literary market the richest collection of recently coined subjects. An original writer, his reflections on *Quixote*, the Escorial, on the figure of Don Juan, and other topics show delicate erudition, talent, and exquisite grace. The modern soul's endless anxieties have found echo in his nimble spirit. Only the transcendental question, the decisive and most necessary subject for man, finds him uncomprehending and without interest. Why? There is in his attitude an enigma which transcends the scope of purely philosophical reflection.

Anyone who would see in this absence of God an unimportant phenomenon in Ortega's development would be seriously misguided. On the contrary, this absence constitutes the unconfessed and ultimate tragedy of Ortega y Gasset. Realistic and autobiographical, his most recent essay demonstrates this with pathetic eloquence. The involved Ortegan thought is revealed as a sort of desperate compensation for his lost faith.

As though obsessed, it re-echoes the theme of modern man, who, having lost his faith in God and in reason, finds nothing else on which to take hold in his shipwreck except disillusioned living. Here is the heart-rending experience of a being uprooted from God, terrorized before the enigma of the universe, who tries to find a meaning of life along the paths of transcendental humanism. Present-day philosophy synthesizes that experience and that adventure.

"For philosophy to be born," says Ortega, "it is necessary that existence, in the form of pure tradition, evaporate, that man cease to believe in the faith of his fathers. Then one's person is left unfettered, with the root of his being unattached, and thus uprooted he has no other recourse than to search by his own effort for a new firm land in which to settle down, that he may again acquire security and foundation. . . . Philosophy is a buoyant effort to keep afloat on the sea of doubt or, in another figure, the treatment to which man submits the frightful open wound in his deepest interior, that it may be healed by faith. As pure tradition was a substitute for the instincts lost by civilization, so philosophy is a substitute for shattered tradition."²

What suppressed desperation, what awful tragedy is glimpsed behind the apparent serenity of these phrases! By his own admission philosophy for Ortega is a balm which lessens the pain of the frightful wound opened by his incredulity, an impassioned attempt to console himself for his loss of God. Even to this extent it is impossible for man to prescind from that absolute reality!

Conclusion

IN THE SINISTER LIGHT OF THE WORLD CONFLAGRATION which we have experienced with horror, the Ortegan message contains unusual tragic significance. Unnoticed aspects of his thought receive unexpected emphasis,

Not with impunity are imagination and instinct enthroned in society at the expense of intelligence. Whoever defends relativistic dilettantism in metaphysics can do no less than profess immorality in ethics. Whoever reduces morality to a sport free from sanctions, cut off from all obligation; whoever reduces it to convenience and vital superfluity, alert only to social demands and the fashionable artistic norms, is illogical if he is frightened before the unleashed barbarity of the masses who threaten civilization, who endanger the cultural legacy of the centuries.

It is painful to see a philosopher of Ortega's stature seriously trying to legitimize with Nietzsche's criterion the immorality of great statesmen in whom one sees the brutal profiles of the superman. In an inferno of horrors Europe has atoned for the poisonous fruits of those disintegrating ideas.

Ortega's is a frightening responsibility before history for having exchanged philosophy's noble mission for

acrobatic sport. There is no more dangerous explosive in the universe than an idea. The great historical changes were conceived in the brains of a few exceptional individuals. For this reason, the intention to reduce philosophical activity to meaningless toil seems like naive childishness, inexcusable in a philosopher. As if one could with impunity play with dynamite! It is still worse if the disseminator of these ideas is a writer of world-wide fame. Ortega's most secret aim is to defend and legitimize tragic atheism.

Having without reasonable cause discarded the supernatural, Ortega wields his destructive mattock against the foundations of science and of culture. We are left only the "disillusioned living," an icy and skeptical pessimism. What does Ortega build on these ruins? His dithyrambs on the festive meaning of life, on vital energy and sumptuousness, on the values of youth are flowers which wither. In his heart he harbors the secret conviction that the enigma of life is insoluble.

We are today experiencing the last phase of the crisis of pseudo humanism. We are actors and spectators terrorized by war's great catastrophe. God grant that the postwar man, purified by an incomparable experience, may retrace his steps and take the road which leads to his Father's house. In opposition to the pseudohumanistic viewpoint, the Scholastic concept of the world and of life must be insisted upon. In the face of rationalism and existentialism, incapable of hierarchically integrating the intellect and vitality, there stands the magnificent synthesis of perennial philosophy. It must not be forgotten that the destiny of Western civilization hangs in the balance. There is no alternative.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. José Ortega y Gasset, *Obras completas* (Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 1936), p. 44.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 589.
3. *Loc. cit.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
5. *Mocedades* (Colección Austral, No. 201), p. 110.
6. *Obras completas*, p. 33.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
9. *Mocedades*, p. 108.
10. *Obras completas*, p. 631.
11. *Ibid.*, p. xvi.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 859.
14. J. Iriarte, *Razón y Fe*, Vol. CXXII (February-April, 1941), Vol. CXXIII (June-July, 1941), Vol. CXXV (January, 1942).
15. Julián Marías, *Historia de la filosofía* (Madrid, Revista de Occidente), p. 388.
16. F. Buzio, *Profeti d'oggi* (Milano, Ed. Bompiani), p. 175.
17. *Obras completas*, p. xi.

PART ONE: SECTION ONE

Chapter One

1. Ernest Renan, *L'Avenir de la science* (Paris, Ed. E. Calmann Lévy, 1894), p. 108.

2. Springing up as a reaction against the exaggerated rationalism of the past century, existentialism is rather a state of spirit than a school of defined principles.

The existential movement is a complex phenomenon marking the decline of an historical epoch, the disintegration of the idealism begun by Descartes. Its theories represent the most rabid criticism of exaggerated rationalism, supreme ruler in the West for three centuries. Though opposed on more than one point, the various existential theories are one in denying the primacy of reason. Anti-intellectualism is perhaps the most peculiar characteristic of the existentialist position.

The individual of flesh and bone becomes an object about which to philosophize; and with him his vital condition: his temporary existence, his worries, his anguish, his tragic existence, his death.

To comprehend the deep significance of this philosophical position, it is necessary to recall the terrible crisis out of which it has sprung. Existentialism is the philosophical expression of the heart-rending, unprecedented crisis which has descended upon the world. There is no reason to be surprised at its language, almost always cabalistic and decadent, at its pathetic manners, its radical and nihilistic solutions, its gloomy pessimism.

A close analysis reveals a bitter resentment in the heart of the existential trend. Man today, having lost faith in reason, trusts myths. In politics it is the blood, the race, the col-

lectivity, the state. In philosophy it is instinct, those obscure and primitive forces beyond the intellect: pure intuition, emotion, anguish, a fundamental form of life that precedes all cognition. The less obvious objective of the existential movement is to find a meaning for that obscure and demoniacal zone of existence. To discover a motive which justifies the life of the human being unceasingly menaced with annihilation.

Existentialism is a transitional mode of thought unable to hope for much from the future. Even though it has a few good points in its favor, such as philosophically recognizing certain eternal questions forgotten by rationalism, existential philosophy nevertheless implies an extremely radical position contrary to reason. Existentialism inevitably leads to skeptical nihilism.

A brief bibliography of the principle authors will be found on pp. 258-61.

Chapter Two

1. *Mocedades*, p. 14.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

Chapter Three

1. *Obras completas*, p. 41.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 244-45.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*

Chapter Four

1. *Obras completas*, p. 841.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 842.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, p. 1096.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 843.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 846.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 849.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 909-10.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 850.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 852.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 859.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, p. 865.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 866.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 867.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 868.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 871.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 875.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 876.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 878.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, p. 893.

Chapter Five

1. *Obras completas*, p. 955.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 956.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 972.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 976.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 977.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Revista de occidente*, VI (1924), pp. 4-5.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Chapter Six

1. *Obras completas*, p. 1323.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 1339, note.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 1338, note.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 1339, note.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 441.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 503.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 1002.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 1232.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 1233.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, p. 1456.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 1455.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 1456.
14. *Teoría de Andalucía*, (Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1942) p. 103.

Chapter Seven

1. It should be noted that the most recent of these Ortegian essays was published at least five years after Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. As for Dilthey, Ortega asserts that he was acquainted with him about 1929; cf. "Guillermo Dilthey y la idea de la vida," in *Teoría de Andalucía* (Revista de Occidente), p. 136.
2. *Meditación de la técnica*, (Buenos Aires, Espasa-Calpe, 1939), p. 93.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
5. *Esquema de la Crisis*, (Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1942), p. 18.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.
12. *Historia como sistema*, (Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1941), p. 29.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 44, note.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 64. This theory of man as history and as a being which creates itself was already defined by Bergson: "Who we are, and what is our character but the condensation of the history which we have lived since our birth?" (*L'Evolution créatrice* [Paris, Alcan, 1930], p. 5).

On the contrary, the purely material object "has no history" (*ibid.*, p. 9). Cf. also pp. 16 and 32.

Bergson is equally explicit on the question of self-creation: "We are constantly creating ourselves. This self-creation is proportionately more complete to the extent that one reflects on what he is doing" (*ibid.*, p. 7). In brief, existence consists "in the indefinite creation of self" (*ibid.*, p. 8).

19. *Historia como sistema*, p. 77.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

21. "Guillermo Dilthey y la idea de la vida," *Teoría de Andalucía*, p. 180.

22. *Ensimismamiento y alteración* (Buenos Aires, Espasa-Calpe, 1939), pp. 26-27.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Chapter Eight

1. *Ideas y creencias* (Buenos Aires, Espasa-Calpe, 1940), p. 13.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 27, note.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Chapter Nine

1. *Mocedades*, p. 165.
2. *Ideas y creencias*, p. 98.
3. *Obras completas*, p. 972.
4. *Historia como sistema*, p. 44.
5. "Guillermo Dilthey y la idea de la vida," *Teoría de Andalucía*, p. 129.

PART ONE: SECTION TWO

Chapter One

1. *Obras completas*, p. 177.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 498.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 499.
4. *Ibid.*
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4. *Ibid.*, p. 1179.
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2. *Meditación de la técnica*, p. 55.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ideas y creencias*, pp. 65-66.
10. *Meditación de la técnica*, p. 92.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
13. It would be useless to glean identical ideas from all of his other works. Cf. "Misión del bibliotecario" and two conferences: "En el centenario de Hegel," and "En el centenario de una universidad." These two latter can be found in his *Ideas y creencias*. "Misión" is from the *Revista de occidente*, Vol. XLVIII, 1935.
14. *Historia como sistema*, p. 49.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
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2. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
3. E. Renan, *L'Avenir de la science* [Paris, Editions E. Calmann Lévy], p. xvi, 5a.

4. *Ibid.*, p. xviii.
5. *Obras completas*, p. 13.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
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8. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
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11. *Ibid.*, p. 306.
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1. Luis Recaséns Siches, *Vida humana, Sociedad y derecho* (Mexico, D. F., Casa de España en Mexico, 1940), p. 19.
2. In later pages Recaséns Siches asserts that the category of value "is more primary than that of being"; that "the judgment evaluates all the other classifications of being; in brief, it evaluates the entire universe with all its zones and categories" (*ibid.*, p. 21).
3. *Revista de occidente*, I (No. 4), 58.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
5. *Obras completas*, p. 284.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 861.
7. Max Scheler, *Ética* (Madrid, Revista de Occidente), I, 26.

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1. *Obras completas*, p. 1201.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 1219.
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4. *Ibid.*, p. 1235-36.
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6. *Ibid.*, p. 1270.
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1. *Obras completas*, p. 1341.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 859.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 1417.
5. *Esquema de la crisis*, p. 49.
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13. *Ibid.*
14. *Historia como sistema*, p. 9.

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1. *Obras completas*, p. 741.

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1. *Mocedades*, p. 32.
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3. *Ibid.*, p. 880.
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12. *Ideas y creencias*, p. 100.
13. *Obras completas*, p. xii.
14. *Historia como sistema*, p. 71.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
17. *Ideas y creencias*, p. 27 n.

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3. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
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5. *Revista de occidente*, XXIV, 267.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 265.
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8. *Ibid.*, p. 859.
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20. *Obras completas*, p. 1002.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 1011.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 1382.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 1006.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, p. 866.
26. *Mocedades*, p. 55.
27. *Obras completas*, p. 12.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 859.

30. Cf. *Ideas y creencias* and *Ensimismamiento y alteración*.
31. *Obras completas*, p. vi.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 1339.
33. *Teoría de Andalucía*, p. 180-81.
34. *Obras completas*, p. 421, note.
35. *Teoría de Andalucía*, p. 181.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 182-83.
37. Cf. *Historia como sistema*, p. 52, 63; *Ensimismamiento y alteración*, p. 27, 90-94; *Ideas y creencias*, p. 38-45.
38. *Obras completas*, p. 32.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 967.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 1344.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 1352.

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 223-24.
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5. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
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4. *Esquema de la crisis*, p. 15. Cf. also Joaquín Xirau, *La Filosofía de Husserl* (Buenos Aires, Ed. Lozada, 1941), p. 13.
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1. Cf. Chaps. II and III of Section II.
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3. *Obras completas*, p. 177, 498.
4. Cf., "Filosofía Pura" and *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: Norton & Co., 1932).
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11. *Meditación de la técnica*, p. 91.
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1. "Meditacion de Don Juan," *Teoría de Andalucía*, p. 69.

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